




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 3 December 2020

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

APPROPRIATION (2020-2021) BILL

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (3.02 pm): The work of our health heroes in keeping the health system at a highly responsive and highly functioning level in 2020 has been nothing short of heroic. They are a large group of Queensland workers who continually put their dedication to their profession ahead of their own personal safety. As a registered nurse and someone who has worked in hospitals and the health industry for many years, I take my hat off to them. It is also one of the reasons why I was so disappointed by this year's budget.

Despite the work of our health heroes in being ready to get Queensland through this pandemic, several HHS budgets are going backwards. It is effectively a cut to operational funding. When these health services need more support, particularly in the middle of the global health pandemic we are still in, these services deserve more funding, not less. They also deserve a health minister who is across her brief and understands that we are dealing with people's lives here. There is a reason why the health portfolio is one of the most important, and that is not because of the size of the budget. It is because the outcomes of service provision can mean the difference between life and death. It is because cutting operational budgets for health services in the middle of a global health pandemic is effectively asking our nurses, doctors, paramedics and midwives to do their jobs with both arms tied behind their back. There is no excuse for it other than poor economic management.

Building a stronger economy means governments can invest in the frontline health services a growing state needs, but Labor's record on managing the state's economy is appalling. Before COVID our economic indicators were all heading in one direction, and that was not good. Under Labor, Queenslanders suffered through higher taxes, infrastructure cuts, high unemployment rates, a massive drop in business confidence and worsening economic conditions. Managing the state budget is about the fiscal levers available to government to kickstart the economy, and before COVID Queensland's economy under Labor was on life support. Queensland was at the bottom of the economic ladder, and Labor was only focussed on playing politics and blaming everyone else.

This budget was not only a budget of broken promises and debt deceit; it was also a missed opportunity for Labor to kickstart the economy, because the federal government's JobKeeper lifeline will not insulate Queensland Labor's economic incompetence for much longer. True to form, Labor will do what they always do: play politics. While we welcome the increased capital expenditure in health—after a \$203 million cut last year—we do not welcome the cuts to the HHS budgets, the biggest of which is to the children's health HHS—our sickest kids. Following the Lady Cilento renaming debacle two years ago, you would think Labor would have learned their lesson.

The budget revealed that, despite still being in a pandemic, the budgets in the following hospital and health services are being cut: Cairns and Hinterland HHS, \$5.401 million; Central Queensland HHS, \$4.951 million; Central West HHS, \$2.358 million; Children's Health Queensland HHS, \$17.919 million; Mackay HHS, \$9.335 million; Metro South HHS, \$8.247 million; North West HHS,

\$9.9 million; Torres and Cape HHS, \$12.291 million; and West Moreton HHS, \$12.914 million. Despite being in a pandemic—the need for supporting medical research is probably the highest in a century—funding for medical research has been cut by \$10.545 million. At a time when medical research is more crucial and at least in more focus, there should be more focus from government, not less.

Regional maternity services are not even mentioned in the budget, which shows that Labor does not care about the regions. So much for the task force and summit before the election when the bush baby crisis was exposed. The minister needs to come clean and explain her plans to restore maternity services because, after all, Queenslanders deserve a world-class public health system no matter where they live, and that is not happening under Labor. You should not have to settle for second best because you live in a regional community. Unlike Labor, the LNP will not stand for it.

One thing we could not compare is health staffing across each HHS because, unlike other years, they are not being reported. Queenslanders will make of that what they will. Speaking of transparency, it is time for Labor to come clean and start publishing the Queensland Health hospital performance data. We know that Queensland Health is still collecting the data—or were, at least—and the excuses have run pretty thin. Queenslanders deserve to know how our hospitals are performing. After all, they are paid for by their taxpayer dollars.

With respect to mental health, domestic and family and sexual violence and child safety, a lot more needs to be done. While we will welcome positive initiatives, as an opposition our job is to hold the government to account. I would say to the government that Queenslanders want to see solutions and action to fix the problems, because again the excuses have run dry. The policy failures of these portfolios are also a matter of life and death. While you cannot protect every life, these are policy areas that deserve a lot more proactive focus over the next four years.

We will continue to call out the failures, but we will also offer positive alternative ideas that can help improve the system and protect vulnerable Queenslanders and their families. When it comes to the government's election commitments, we will hold the government to account for each and every promise on behalf of every community they impact.

It has been a tough year for residents in Mudgeeraba. We have had locals who have needed to travel interstate to get their children life-improving surgery, only to hit roadblocks at every turn thanks to the heartless Palaszczuk Labor government. We have had residents who have had additional stress on their plate because they have had to deal with the destructive and intimidating actions of hoons throughout the night. We have had business owners who were not about to take jobs just 30 minutes down the road because the Palaszczuk Labor government made it so difficult to get across the border. The people of Mudgeeraba have shown remarkable resilience during this time, and I feel so honoured to represent this mighty community. That is why I am furious.

I am furious on behalf of my community, who are being treated like fools by the Palaszczuk Labor government. This year's budget is proof. Labor has shown us their glossy budget papers, but there is nothing shiny and new in there for Mudgeeraba locals. It is full of recycled announcements, and there is nothing that has my community excited and inspired for 2021 and beyond. We have been blindsided by a \$130 billion debt bomb by Labor. Whilst we are expected to pay it back, we are getting nothing in return. In fact, there is no new funding west of the M1 in my electorate.

Let me take the House through the projects Mudgeeraba locals fought for but missed out on in Labor's budget. I will begin with our community organisations that are the beating heart of the Mudgeeraba community. We missed out on vital funding to keep My Community Legal afloat. My Community Legal provides free legal advice to those who cannot afford a lawyer. Rob and the team have worked tirelessly to support survivors of domestic violence and vulnerable people, and I extend a massive thanks to them on behalf of our community for the work they do.

While they are providing this important service, My Community Legal also trains the next generation of lawyers through its volunteer program. My Community Legal does much for our community, but it does not receive funding from the state government to deliver these important services. That is why I was proud to announce \$600,000 in funding for My Community Legal during the election campaign, and I received much support for this announcement. In fact, I want to read a Facebook post outlining the importance of providing funding for My Community Legal. It states—

Like any community support organisation, they—
meaning My Community Legal—

are struggling to acquire regular funding to maintain a core work team to keep up the great work. We need to make sure that regional communities get the support they need—

This is a Facebook post from Labor's own failed candidate in Mudgeeraba. I table the post.

Tabled paper. Extract, dated 30 October, from the Facebook page of the Labor candidate for Mudgeeraba, Maxim Otten-Kamp, in relation to election promises [350](#).

Labor are not even listening to their own candidate, who agrees that My Community Legal needs funding. I hope to see Annastacia Palaszczuk and Labor come to the table and provide funding to My Community Legal to ensure this organisation can continue to provide legal advice to those in need.

We also missed out on more female changing facilities for grassroots sports clubs. Those opposite can trumpet on about the advertised funding for the Robina Raptors and the Gold Coast Dolphins but, really, the funding was announced a long time ago and construction has already begun. Meanwhile, the Mudgeeraba Redbacks, the Mudgeeraba Soccer Club and Magic United have missed out on funding for much needed female change facilities. This might not mean a lot to Labor MPs or the Treasurer, but it means that female players at the Mudgeeraba Redbacks would not have to get changed under one of my marquees while volunteers hold towels up for privacy. It means that these women and girls could have the same opportunities as the men without worrying about how they will get in and out of their gear.

We know that Labor's track record on sports funding is riddled with blatant pork-barrelling by the former minister for sport. An Auditor-General's report found that Labor's sports minister overruled his department's expert advice on 33 occasions and Labor seats were favoured in the allocation of funding. This was Labor's chance to rectify their legacy of sports rorts, but they have failed budding female sports stars yet again.

Whilst girls and women in the Mudgeeraba electorate are waiting for the facilities that would allow them to train in comfort, residents are continuing to wait for a train in Merrimac. That is right: we are no closer to having a train station at Merrimac. This is one of the missing pieces of the public transport puzzle in our area that was announced three years ago at the last election. How can Labor expect residents to use their cars less if there is no other way to get out and about in our area?

While we missed out on improved public transport infrastructure, Labor have put salt in the wound by making it more expensive to own a car. They have increased the cost of rego above inflation again. This is just another sneaky money grab from Labor, and it is locals who are paying the price. Indeed, we are spending a lot of time in our cars, and there are so many roads and infrastructure projects that are in dire need of funding in our area. Unfortunately, we have missed out on so many vital road infrastructure projects in Labor's budget too.

I cannot count how many times I have written to the minister and the main roads department about the state of Worongary Road. Bizarrely, Labor have resurfaced only a portion of the road—and they are about to start another bit—and we have received countless complaints at my office about this lazy shortcut of a solution which attempts to improve this dangerous road. We need a proper upgrade and not a bandaid temporary fix.

We also have not seen a cent towards ripping up the roundabout at Gooding Drive and putting in a signalised intersection or to dual lane the westbound section of Gooding Drive from Bourton Road. The Carrara roundabout is a dangerous roundabout. I cannot tell the House how many accidents I have seen there as traffic banks up and people try dangerous manoeuvres to try to get onto the roundabout. Even my own kids have been T-boned there. After an overwhelming response to my postcard campaign to signalise Gooding Drive, I was proud to stand with the LNP team to announce that we would deliver the project, so now it is time that the Labor government came to the table and funded this important upgrade to improve road safety for Gold Coasters.

Other projects that we missed out on were raising the Austinville Causeway, the dangerous Tallai Road and Mudgeeraba Road intersection and, sadly, the Springbrook footpath. The City of Gold Coast have committed to funding half of the construction of a footpath along Springbrook Road to ensure that students at Springbrook State School are not forced to walk on the road to get to school. This is a dangerous, busy road. One resident told me he felt like the kids were forced to play Russian roulette with cars. He asked, 'What's the cost of a child's life?' and he is absolutely right. The Labor government need to provide their portion of funding so we can get this footpath constructed as a matter of urgency. There is nothing more important than the safety of our children, and I will continue to fight for kids in our electorate.

That is why I am sad to say that we have missed out on a new state high school west of the M1. So many people want to move to the Mudgeeraba electorate, and who can blame them. We live in the best place in the world. Enrolments at our local schools are skyrocketing. Robina State High School is almost at capacity and is landlocked for any future development. That is why the LNP announced planning for a new state high school to cater for growth and create local jobs. It is vital that Labor commits to planning a new state high school west of the M1 so that local families can remain in the area from the time their child is in prep to when they are prepping for their final exams.

While families are flocking to the Mudgeeraba electorate and our fabulous schools, I also want to see them enjoy our unique tourism experiences. Labor like to talk big about tourism but they have not delivered anything for Mudgeeraba in this budget. This is an important reminder for the Labor

government, who gather at a Gold Coast beach for their press conferences about tourism then jet back off to Brisbane. On the Gold Coast our tourism offerings do not start and finish at the sand; we also have the gorgeous hinterland. We have Natural Bridge, the Mouses House and fantastic hiking tracks, but what we are missing is tourism signage at Springbrook, which the LNP was proud to commit to during the election campaign. Tourism signage is a simple and effective way to ensure that tourists can enjoy all that Springbrook has to offer and not turn around and head back down to the Numinbah Valley.

The green behind the 'Gold' is also found at Mudgeeraba Creek, which is located just across the road from Somerset College. I was proud to have the Leader of the Opposition visit the creek with me, and it is clear that he is serious about embracing our natural waterway assets as part of our tourism recovery in Queensland. He met with locals Ange and Reg who live just up the road from the creek and have never seen it in such a bad state. It constantly floods, which leaves them concerned that their home will be impacted when there is a downpour. Years ago, the Mudgeeraba Creek was a thriving ecosystem and locals knew the excitement of spotting platypus in the area. Sadly, the platypus have not returned to the creek. The LNP committed to giving Landcare \$100 million to rejuvenate the creek, but unfortunately that has not happened under this government.

In his budget speech, the Treasurer talked about travelling the road together. Well, if we are judging by the state of the roads that the Labor Treasurer refuses to upgrade in Mudgeeraba, it is going to be a bumpy ride. In fact, I would go as far as to say that the people of Mudgeeraba are being taken for a ride by a Palaszczuk Labor government that is lumping us with a huge tax burden with nothing in return locally.