




Speech By
Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR OODGEROO

Record of Proceedings, 18 June 2021

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (12.34 pm): I rise to speak to the 2021-22 budget. Having been in this place for 13 budgets—10 of them Labor—I can agree that this is a typical Labor government budget. It is a budget in which it is losing control of law and order, housing, the health system and state government finances. In terms of the state finances, we typically see debt and deficit blowouts, a long-range surplus projected but not worth the paper it is written on, living beyond our means, high taxes, new taxes, and investment in infrastructure is light, delayed and recycled. Regarding debt in those 10 Labor budgets, I have seen state debt blow out year upon year via the Labor way because the underlying attitude is, 'It's only government money. You can always get more. We'll increase taxes on the rich or just keep going back to business—the cash cow—because they can afford it,' like there is a government money tree.

This laissez-faire attitude to government finances means that our grandchildren will be saddled with the government debt in the range of \$127 billion and rising, and that says, 'Let future generations of Queenslanders pay for the financial ineptitude of long-term Labor governments.' Some have described this Labor way as stealing from our grandchildren. Next week I will become a grandfather for the first time. Poppy Robbo and Grandma Julie will be pouring out love and gifts on Junior, but the last thing we want to do is to burden our son and his wife and their first child with the debt of our generation. But that is what Labor is doing and has been doing now in two long-term Labor governments—the Beattie-Bligh Labor government of roughly 14 years duration and now this Palaszczuk Labor government that will be of 10 years duration by the time we get to the next election. This government has been racking up generational debt for a long time—long before COVID, long before the GFC. These are systemic issues, and when will Labor governments learn to live within their means over the long term and balance their books like everyone else has to—every family, every business and every government?

Building job-creating, big-ticket infrastructure items and keeping them on budget and on time is critical. We see Labor's 'rail fail' at another level in this budget when we consider Cross River Rail. The government's \$5.4 billion Cross River Rail project has blown out to \$6.88 billion and rising despite assurances that it will be delivered on time and on budget. As I have said in this House, and just this week again, Queenslanders are carrying the Palaszczuk government's failures on the economy like a ball and chain around our ankles. Labor went broke in the Bligh era in a mining boom before the GFC. It lost our AAA credit rating. It sold \$15 billion of assets and spent it all without paying debt down, and all with debt hurtling toward \$100 billion before COVID.

As I have said, Labor's policies have stifled the tourism industry recovery and it wants the feds to solve the problem that it has partly created. Shutdowns without notice nor communication like the Straddie camping ground shutdown at Easter hurt small tourism operators and other small businesses that rely on those bookings and rely on the certainty, and the workers who rely on the work remain

underemployed. International education is also doing it tough. ABS data says that Australia's onshore international education sector was worth \$40 billion prior to COVID. It has fallen since to approximately \$31 billion as at April 2021 and heading further south. Queenslanders had a good share of that industry, but this government has failed to position Queensland well for when the international borders open up and we can take students again and rebuild this job-creating industry.

While I am no fan of Labor in Victoria, Victoria has taken steps to position itself comparative to Queensland for when the doors reopen. One step was to put together a detailed proposal for a quarantine hub, one that addressed the issues that satisfied the federal government's requirements to keep us safe and other logistical issues. In contrast, despite repeated requests for the same detail, the Queensland government was unable to do so and has therefore failed to establish a plan for a hub. States like Victoria will be prepared and able to take international students once they are vaccinated and through the quarantine hubs, which will give Victoria an advantage over Queensland education operators, all while the Queensland government dithers. This multibillion dollar industry will go south unless corrective action is taken. I call on the Palaszczuk government to do better and to do more in this preparation.

The budget does have a little good news for the Redlands Coast. The Redland Hospital upgrade may finally be happening, though the ICU may still be some years off. There is no evidence, sadly, of an increase in palliative care funding, though I still hope to hear further about that, nor a plan to end the ambulance ramping in this upgrade. In terms of marine infrastructure, I have mentioned the Harold Walker Jetty is to be restored. The budget papers also reveal in terms of Wellington Point High something I have been calling out for for some time, which is an upgrade to the deteriorating hall. The government finally appears to have agreed to that by providing \$800,000. I am assuming that it is to that particular building though it is not clear yet. It is not enough. It will help. We need to see more detail.

The situation in relation to the Mount Cotton fire station is an absolute farce. Before the election the member for Springwood, Minister de Brenni, promised a new fire station in Mount Cotton. He named the road it would be on in Mount Cotton. The budget papers reveal it is going somewhere else, not to Mount Cotton in the Redlands—another broken election promise.

This budget was a missed opportunity for many projects and services that I will keep fighting for such as the Wellington Point breakwater project, facilities and air conditioning for all of the schools in the Oodgeroo electorate—which is a program that is going along but going along very slowly in my electorate for some reason, slower than it is in the electorates of the three Labor members in the Redlands; I will let people come to their own conclusions on that—police resources for community safety, and sustainable fishing, including artificial reefs. I have regularly mentioned koala protection measures, water quality in terms of run-off into Southern Moreton Bay, turtle, dugong and other marine and fisheries research and more targeted funding to North Stradbroke Island with the economic transition coming close to an end.

In terms of jobs and businesses, small businesses and tourism operators are doing it tough in the Redlands. Tourism has been hammered. The government must work more effectively with the chambers of commerce and all businesses so that all can prosper on North Stradbroke Island and the Redlands Coast. I have spoken about it several times and I will continue to call for the funding to be returned to the North Stradbroke Island Chamber of Commerce that was cut so that they can continue to support and help grow the businesses that Labor has deserted.

In terms of transport and roads infrastructure, major state arterial roads in the Redlands Coast are choked and clogged with traffic. State Redlands roads have fallen into disrepair over decades. They need hundreds of millions of dollars to catch up. The state government is conducting very little roadwork on major arterial roads. It is disappointing that the government is working at a snail's pace on the upgrade of the Cleveland-Redland Bay Road. It is the only major upgrade of road that we can see in the budget at this point, with only \$14.6 million allocated in this budget out of \$110 million promised. We need to move at a faster pace than that. The Thornlands section has been cut from this project meaning it is only a partial duplication, not the full duplication. One other section of road where our pressure did provide a result was the Gateway Motorway onramp upgrade at Old Cleveland Road.

With respect to the Cleveland line duplication from Manly to Cleveland, I have raised this infrastructure project many times and I continue to call on the government to provide it. It has been promised before by Labor governments and was costed at approximately \$170 million. It was cancelled by Labor. It will now cost approximately \$300 million or even more. For the Redlands Coast to participate in the Olympics via sporting venues, this needs to be built and work started sooner rather than later. For Cross River Rail to be of any value to Redlands Coast commuters, the Cleveland line duplication is critical and should have been built concurrently with Cross River Rail or even before.

While speaking of Cross River Rail, I again repeat what transport experts say: that the government's promise of a 14-minute time saving on the Cleveland line is contingent upon the line duplication occurring when Cross River Rail opens. As I mentioned in my address-in-reply speech, the member for Capalaba promised at an election that when Cross River Rail is built it will save 14 minutes on the train commute to the city. Labor has not since repeated that election promise, certainly not recently, and locals are wondering if it is still an active promise or is it a broken promise. I call on Labor to tell us which one it is at the next opportunity.

I was glad to hear the member for Capalaba finally join my call for the Eastern Busway to be built in time for the Olympics. In the lead-up to the budget Labor members suddenly rediscovered the Eastern Busway in their language and locals read that as a possible budget announcement. Hopefully this Donny-come-lately attitude actually has some substance behind it and is not just Labor words. In terms of the Olympics, the budget has proved a missed opportunity for Labor to show us the money: to provide proof that they are going to be inclusive of the Redlands Coast in the Olympics infrastructure commitments; the evidence of funding, even planning, design, refreshed business case funding et cetera, even in the forwards and beyond, for the Eastern Busway, the Cleveland line and state arterial road duplications in support of the Olympics in the future so that the Redlands can provide sporting venues and to alleviate the current congestion as soon as possible.

With this budget opportunity now gone, in question time this morning I called on the Premier to at least confirm that these key public transport infrastructure items are included in the Olympic bid proposal to put it beyond doubt and to provide us with costings and construction time lines on these projects so that we know the Redlands Coast has been included and that everyone from the Redlands Coast, the city council, the businesses, families, commuters and others can start planning around these developments and pipelines of work. Sadly, today the Premier refused to confirm the situation. Locals are watching with a heightened expectation of Labor delivering and I am sure if this state government lets them down they will send them a clear message at the 2022 federal election and the 2024 state election.

Recently in this House I spoke on a motion about various aspects of health. I encourage people to read that so that I am not repeating myself. Redlands is part of the health crisis. As I said, I do not want to repeat everything I have said in previous speeches, but Labor is losing control of health in Queensland—in the Redlands—whether it is emergency department times, whether it is elective surgery, dental surgery, mental health incidents, ambulance ramping or palliative care provision. Sadly, every metric is blowing out at Redland Hospital. Ambulance ramping at Redland Hospital has become as high as 51 per cent, which is as bad as it has ever been in our area to my understanding. There are long waits to get a car park, which will be paid parking at best. The government needs to confirm what that fee will be and whether the current free parking will be continued or some of that taken out.

Under this Premier, like under Anna Bligh, Queensland Health is a basket case and getting worse. That is despite the hard work of our overstretched doctors, nurses and allied health professionals. The government claims a record health budget will fix it, but we have heard the same thing year upon year. It is not only about money, but our frontline services having access to the specific resources they need and Queenslanders having access to a world-class health system.

If the government wanted to do something about bed blockage it could expand the Redland Residential Care centre, a state facility on the Redland Hospital precinct. That would be a great help. The government could expand palliative care as well. In terms of this state budget, it is a typical Labor budget that does little to get Queensland through the difficult times that we are in. It is full of broken promises to the Redlands. It provides little relief for Redlanders and does not deliver our fair share of infrastructure and services. Redlanders can only hope that the desire to hold a successful Olympics will force the government to act on big ticket infrastructure items.