




Speech By  
**Peter Russo**  
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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Record of Proceedings, 18 June 2021

## APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

### APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (12.28 pm): I rise to speak in support of the 2021 appropriation bills. I am deeply honoured to be able to stand here as the representative for the seat of Toohey, where we are extremely fortunate to have a diverse, vibrant and active multicultural community. If people want to see multicultural diversity working, I invite them to come and visit the amazing retailers and small business operators across my electorate.

I offer my congratulations to the Treasurer, Cameron Dick, for his outstanding effort in once again looking after the future of all Queenslanders. This budget is another great outcome for Queensland and is in direct contrast to the previous cut-and-burn actions of the LNP government. Our Labor government is leading the way by investing in jobs, supporting business and manufacturing, and looking after workers and their families and those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged while strengthening the future of Queensland. As a direct result of this budget, my school communities will receive a total of over \$8.285 million for upgrades, refurbishments and maintenance. MacGregor State School, MacGregor State High School, Moorooka State School, Sunnybank Special School, Sunnybank State High School and Warrigal Road State School will be receiving over \$7.16 million and the remaining \$1.12 million has been set aside for maintenance and minor works across all schools. This is a great outcome.

The students and teachers at the schools across Toohey will also see the benefits of the Cooler Cleaner Schools program, which has been rolling out across the schools. This \$477 million program is on track to be completed across the state by mid-2022. Some of my schools were recording temperatures in the 40 degrees in classrooms. This was not good for students and it was not good for teachers, but all of that has changed thanks to the Palaszczuk government. This program is well supplemented by the \$168 million Advancing Clean Energy Schools program to install solar panels on school rooftops. This is over half a billion dollars invested in improving the learning environment for students. The P&C associations across the schools in my area are all very excited because not only do they no longer need to fundraise to bring air conditioning to their schools but they are also pleased the costs for running the air conditioning will be offset by installing solar panels. Their fundraising can now be targeted at achieving other valuable outcomes for the students and their school communities.

Support has been given to teachers and teacher aides. Since 2015 the Palaszczuk government has employed over 6,000 new teachers and 1,500 teacher aides. Let us compare this to the previous LNP government, which cut teacher numbers and slashed frontline workers at schools. What a difference this has made. Here in Queensland we now have the lowest teacher-to-student ratio in the country.

One of my personal favourite programs amongst those on offer through our world-class education system is the program supporting at-risk secondary students to engage them and lead them back into learning, training or work. There are two schools in my electorate offering support for young people,

with a third one just getting underway. The Sunnybank State High School's SunnyFutures program is a wonderful program to engage young people in finding work. It was only a few weeks ago that I was at the school for the launch of its Canstruct Intensive Care Unit and the launch of its community services gateway to industry project. The dedication shown by the school executive and the teachers is brilliant. Carinity Education Southside is supporting young and vulnerable teenage girls get an education which will put them in a good position for their futures. The BUSY school is establishing a campus in Salisbury.

It was tremendously pleasing to learn this budget includes an investment of \$320 million over four years and \$80 million each year ongoing for the flagship Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative. Up to 15,000 disadvantaged Queenslanders each year will benefit from targeted Skilling Queenslanders for Work programs designed to equip jobseekers with the skills, qualifications and experience needed to enter and stay in the workforce. This builds on the \$430 million investment by the Palaszczuk government since 2015 in Skilling Queenslanders for Work.

Everywhere I go across Toohy there are people who tell me how great the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program is. This is the program the LNP cut in 2015. It just does not get it. Since Labor brought back the program, over 35,000 disadvantaged Queenslanders have been helped into work. That is 35,000 Queenslanders who have been provided with dignity through work so they can put food on their family's table and a roof over their heads. You cannot put a price on someone's self-esteem and dignity, but you also cannot explain these concepts to the LNP, which sacked workers and cut back on programs that were helping people find work.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my budget speech has been reviewed and approved for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*.

*The speech read as follows—*

The 2021-22 Budget continues to provide significant funding to protect communities and keep Queenslanders safe, as well as underpin the government's ongoing effort to revitalise frontline service delivery.

The Palaszczuk Government continues to focus on ensuring strong and effective frontline service delivery, including significant investment in new facilities for staff and to support communities that need government assistance.

The 2021-22 Queensland Police Service capital program of \$156.1 million supports quality frontline services and will fund police facilities, motor vehicles, vessels and other essential equipment.

This Budget continues to increase the number of police officers as part of the government's 2020 election commitment to hire an additional 2,025 police personnel over the next five years.

The Budget also continues to support the hiring of additional firefighters as part of the 2020 election commitment to increase fire personnel by 357 over five years to help the community prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from the impact of fire and emergency events.

This budget sees the introduction of the Palaszczuk government's flagship Queensland Jobs Fund. The first recipient under this program will be the Translational Research Institute (TRI) at Woolloongabba.

The Translational Manufacturing Institute (TMI), will be built with a \$20 million investment from the Queensland Jobs Fund.

Scientists at TRI are already inventing the treatments of the future and the vaccines of the future. This investment will allow them to manufacture them here instead of sending the local knowledge and research results overseas.

We will finally realise a local domestic vaccine manufacturing capability. TMI at TRI will support our start-ups and will allow us to do advanced commercialisation. In the process, we will create 500 jobs over the next 10 years. Our biomedical sector continues to grow. It already employs 10,000 Queenslanders across 1,200 different companies.

Can you imagine where we would be today if the Labor Palaszczuk Government had not provided support for Queenslanders across the state?

The 2021-22 Budget provides more than \$6.1 billion in a range of concessions and support measures primarily designed to lower the cost of living. This includes a range of energy rebates, targeted discounts, subsidies, and concessions including ones dedicated to eligible seniors, pensioners, veterans and low-income families.

Support is also provided to lower the costs of water, transport, education and housing. The majority of Queenslanders receive at least one Queensland Government concession and, in many cases, may benefit from multiple concessions each year.

The Budget continues to support social housing in Queensland, including the establishment of a \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund to drive new supply to support current and future housing need.

Returns of \$160 million over 4 years are anticipated from the Fund. The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-25 provides \$1.9 billion over 4 years to boost housing supply and increase housing and homelessness support across Queensland.

This is comprised of \$1.8 billion of expenditure over 4 years to increase the supply of social housing and to upgrade the existing social housing property portfolio.

There will be \$60 million over 2 years, with \$30 million in 2021-22, to fast-track immediate social housing projects and initiatives and to prepare a pipeline of work for future years.

An amount of \$94.9 million over 4 years, with \$23.7 million in 2021-22, will support the housing and homelessness service system and deliver better outcomes for Queenslanders. This initiative includes \$20 million over 4 years to expand domestic and family violence support services; \$20 million over 4 years for homelessness initiatives including through headleases and crisis housing and supports; and an amount of \$54.9 million over 4 years to fund essential continuing services delivered through the First Housing Action Plan 2017-2020.

Small businesses employ nearly one million people across Queensland. One million people who faced tough times when the pandemic shut business down. There was over \$196 million provided by the Palaszczuk government through grants to help small business stay open. So many people have told me the support they received under the adaptation grants were the difference between closing and paying a bill or even changing the way they did business because they were able to explore other ways to keep trading such going online. We were there for them and they appreciated the support. But it doesn't stop there. There is a further \$140 million under the Big Plans for Small Business strategy. Only my government has the plans that will take us forward and lead the way to full economic recovery.

It is widely known I hold a long-standing interest in refugees and asylum seekers. In case anyone doesn't know I was even involved in a legal case that made international headlines. I will always ascertain that anyone seeking refuge or asylum should be treated with dignity and respect.

To say I am appalled at the way the Morrison Coalition Government is handling the way asylum Seekers and refugees to our country are being treated is an understatement.

We know the federal Government has vacated both their moral and financial responsibilities for these people. I am pleased the Queensland Government stepped up to provide necessities such as food, housing and even medication to people seeking asylum. The Queensland Government, yet again, is picking up the baton for the Commonwealth and will continue to support this important work through to 2024-2025.

It gladdens my soul that the community I represent is so multiculturally diverse. My community is like a mini united nations in good working action. Every year I have seen the expansion of multicultural festivals and community events across the southside. It is through the knowledge and engagement with each other's cultures that we grow and provide strength to create a better outcome for all.

I am very pleased to see the Celebrating Multicultural Queensland Grants continue. I see wonderful results of this grants program and I look forward to attending many more festivals and community events that will be held as a result of this funding being made available.

When we look at how Queenslanders are commuting the data shows there has been an increase in cyclists out and about. Even during the COVID shutdown people were taking to bikes for exercise. Investing in bike riding means better health, and better communities. In a typical week there are over 800,000 Queenslanders riding bikes. We know it is important to create safe ways for cyclists to get around. There have been over 250 projects funded by the Palaszczuk government including the dedicated cycleway the V1—Veloway 1—from Eight Mile Plains to South Brisbane. I have seen many commuters using the V1 as a quick and easy way to get from home and into the city for work and recreation.

Another fantastic project that is rolling out is the Cross River Rail project which will provide greatly appreciated benefits to my electorate. We are future proofing our rail system. In 2021-22, \$1.5 billion has been allocated to the continued construction of the \$6.9 billion Cross River Rail project in Brisbane.

The project will introduce a new world-class signalling system, deliver three new Gold Coast stations at Pimpama, Helensvale North and Merrimac, and significant upgrades to eight above-ground stations at Salisbury, Rocklea, Moorooka, Yeerongpilly, Yeronga, Fairfield, Dutton Park and Exhibition.

Cross River Rail will support up to 7,700 full-time equivalent jobs and 450 new apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities during construction. This is amazing project will be boosting the economy every single day.

I have been receiving briefings on the roll-out and I am looking forward to seeing the new stations in my area which include disability access allowing greater accessibility for more Queenslanders and visitors to travel across the region and down to the Gold Coast.

I haven't even touched on the Coopers Plains Level Crossing. I campaigned on this issue back in 2015 when I was first elected. Older residents have told me this level crossing has been an issue for over 40 years!

In the lead up to the election last year I was able to make the first commitment from the state government towards a joint initiative across all three levels of government. The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) are currently undertaking a business case for the rail level crossing project. The business case will confirm project viability and the cost of the preferred option. Considerations will include corridor constraints, road user and active transport needs, engineering, community, environmental and other factors.

This year the Boundary Road Coopers Plains rail level crossing funding commitment will receive \$5.7 million out of \$146 million total towards upgrading the rail level crossing.

This project will be delivered in partnership with the Australian Government, and TMR will continue to work closely with Brisbane City Council who control the roads surrounding the level crossing, and Queensland Rail, as planning progresses.

There are big plans underway for the QEII Hospital in Coopers Plains. One of the seven new satellite hospitals included in the \$265 million dollar investment will be co-located at QEII Hospital. This is a \$37.5 million investment and a fantastic outcome for my southside community. The satellite hospitals project at QEII alone will support 75 full time equivalent construction jobs over the life of the project and will further support local small businesses, building material suppliers, plumbers and other trades people.

The \$100 million Care4Qld package will provide for an additional 26 beds at the QEII Hospital with a suite of wrap around services for patients also included in the Care4Qld package. The bed ward fit out will support an additional 34 jobs just at the QEII.

And I haven't stopped there. Metro South Health have identified a need at the QEII hospital for an increase in the number of car parks at the hospital. It is no surprise the Palaszczuk Government has listened and there are plans being reviewed for a multi storey car park to be built at QEII.

Things are moving and the Palaszczuk Government is continually planning for future projects to revive and to grow our health system. This vital work was needed after the previous LNP Government sacked 4,800 health staff and cut \$1.6 billion out of the Health Budget. And, if that wasn't enough they then attacked doctors pay and conditions.

The Palaszczuk Government, my government, has a strong commitment to improve infrastructure and grow jobs and the economy, across all sectors. We are standing shoulder to shoulder with our communities. Our Government is not leaving workers, their families, or the vulnerable or disadvantaged in the community behind. We're standing shoulder to shoulder with them to get things done. We're in this, together, for the long haul.

I commend these bills to the House.