



Speech By  
**Ros Bates**

**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

---

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2021


## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL**

### **APPROPRIATION (2020-2021) BILL**

#### **Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

#### **Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill**

#### **Health and Environment Committee, Report**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (4.42 pm): I rise today to state again the LNP's reservations regarding the crippling debt into which Labor and this government are leading the state with a glib resoluteness that ignores the sad fiscal realities Queensland finds itself in. On the Gold Coast, tourism has been hit hard by repeated border closures. Jobs have been lost, spending is down and families have been separated. It has been a difficult year.

During the election campaign, Labor promised to keep spending down. It promised to leave Queenslanders with \$4 billion in debt—a frightening enough figure but understandable in these difficult pandemic times during which our economy has suffered so much. However, when the Treasurer rose last December to introduce this bill, the whole truth was revealed: \$28 billion. That is \$28 billion that your children, their children and likely their children will be paying off because this profligate government cannot keep public spending in check. Despite significant help from the Commonwealth, Labor seems to ignore the economic realities. The times have been tough for Queensland. Already saddled with a seven per cent unemployment rate, this additional \$28 billion does not add to the state's net worth. It does not add to the infrastructure that we need to get this great state working again. This budget gave Labor the opportunity to apply the financial levers to help manage the Queensland economy. Instead, we get a \$28 billion black hole.

For everyday Queenslanders, it does not improve health outcomes—which, as a nurse, I am passionate about, as everyone in this place knows. We have more health and hospital services running at an operating loss—11 out of 16—so the doctors and nurses who should be focusing on fixing people are worried about fixing the back room. Already we know that eight HHSs across the state will lose millions of dollars from their budgets, but the biggest cut—\$17.9 million—was saved for the Children's Health Queensland service. That is right—the people who look after our sickest kids.

There is no mention of rural maternity services. Just last week, I visited the Darling Downs where I was shocked to learn that one labour ward in the Chinchilla health service was being used as an office. Women and bubs deserve the best health care that Queensland can offer, no matter where they live. They should not be forced to drive hours away from their family and community support to deliver their babies. The same goes for mental health services, as my colleague and shadow assistant minister for mental health, the member for Southport, will confirm. Just because you live outside Brisbane does not mean you should not be able to access the very best health care that Queensland can offer. As I have

said before in this place, there is a reason why Queensland Health has one of the biggest budgets in the government. It is literally life and death. Sadly, Queenslanders know how inept Queensland Labor is in managing this most vital of portfolios.

We have a minister who is not up to speed on her portfolio and a department that is not managing it for her. There is no transparency on health staffing levels, and performance data has been hidden for 12 months. The department is hiding those figures. It does not hold information on the value of lost or stolen drugs. We know that assaults against medical staff are getting worse; they are up by 40 per cent according to recent media reports. There were 700 frontline staff attacked in my region on the Gold Coast, and there was nothing in this budget to assist with improving their safety and security. Instead, they get IT systems that do not pay them or underpay them. We still do not know when the S/4HANA IT system will be fixed or when the vendors who are owed millions of dollars will be paid.

The botched rollout of the ieMR is already shaping as the next payroll disaster—and that cost Queenslanders \$1.25 billion. Labor will spend millions on renaming a hospital while patients are treated in corridors and storerooms. They will stand in front of hospitals, as backdrops to shameless media stunts, when behind the doors our hardworking medical staff do not have the right equipment, the protection they need and the support to save Queensland lives.

Finally, this week marks a critical juncture in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic that so drastically altered all of our lives last year. I urge those opposite to do the right thing and make sure these vaccines are spread equitably across this great state so that all Queenslanders have the best chance of a healthy 2021, reunited with their families and friends.