




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BONNEY

Record of Proceedings, 17 June 2021

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (8.47 pm): I will begin by talking about what this budget means for my electorate of Bonney. This morning I found out that the Premier did not know the name of my electorate, so I will just update her. It is on the Gold Coast. It is named after one of the most extraordinary women Queensland has produced, Lores Bonney, and at the last election there was a nine per cent swing to the LNP, so that is how the Premier can find it next time.

Our electorate is growing and changing. We have a community that is not only growing in size but also in connectedness. Residents are proud of our part of the Gold Coast, where they live and love what our area has to offer. I could not be more proud to represent Bonney, and I will keep fighting to get the best outcomes for them. I just wish that I could say this government was doing the same.

I continue, with my colleagues, to ask for much needed funding to keep up with the growth on the Gold Coast. Yet again we see empty promises with either no funding or waiting years for it to be realised. The second M1, or Coomera Connector, has taken a ridiculously long time to plan, and now we see that only seven per cent of its funding will be spent in the next year. This road is long overdue. There are not many people who would say they regularly get a clear run on the M1, and it is often most congested in the areas this alternative route will run between, that is, Helensvale, Pimpama and Yatala. The Gold Coast is the fastest growing region in Queensland. At the moment, you have to get on a National Highway to drive between many of our suburbs. It does not take over six years to plan a 16-kilometre road, especially when the government owns nearly 90 per cent of the corridor it is going in, and it should not take a further four years to build one.

In relation to light rail, I find it difficult to fathom that the majority of money for stage 3 will not be spent until after 2024. Stage 2, from the hospital to Helensvale, was finished almost four years ago, and this budget shows we will be lucky to finish stage 3 within eight years of that. We need light rail. It has to be the rapid public transport spine that runs down our city, and it is crucial to managing our growth. There should be rolling construction between stages rather than continual funding fights and the posturing of those opposite. It does not help us to get the infrastructure we need and only looks to create division and fear in our communities.

When it comes to roads, the main intersection I am still waiting on funding for is the Pine Ridge Road, Captain Cook Drive and Brisbane Road intersection. This is after we successfully fought to get funding for the Harbour Town intersection upgrade. I have written to the minister and his department multiple times about this. With the new Arundel Logistics Hub, Coombabah State High School and businesses in the area, it is a nightmare at most times of the day and at peak hour cars can back up for hundreds of metres. Just recently, we saw the tender for the business case go up and disappear a week later. Council has put over \$5 million on the table for the upgrade, but without state funding we cannot get the full upgrade that is so desperately needed.

We have had a big win with the government finally seeing the need to fix some of our old buildings at Coombabah State High School. I was looking back at my previous budget wish lists and they have been eerily similar every year for the past three years—always asking for more permanent buildings in place of demountables at my local schools. The upgraded multistorey facility at Coombabah high will make a big difference to this fantastic school, increasing their capacity and also giving them a space they can be proud of. I would sincerely like to thank principal Chris Kern for his continued hard work in leading this school.

I wish I could say the same for Arundel State School. We got nothing for the permanent buildings. Last year the LNP made a huge commitment to build a multistorey learning centre, and last February the minister claimed she would go one better than a funding commitment and master plan the entire school. Since then we have not seen a dollar of funding for this master plan. In fact my recent letter back from the minister referenced a principal who has not been at the school for over two years. I table that correspondence for the benefit of the House. It shows again that Labor has no plan for Arundel State School and no idea what is going on there.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 11 May 2021, from the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing, Hon. Grace Grace, to the member for Bonney, Mr Sam O'Connor MP, in relation to the concept plan for Arundel State School [903](#).

Labrador State School needs a hall upgrade—much more than the government's committed two fans, but I do welcome the half a million dollars we have secured to at least make it a bit better for the students there. Southport Special School has been promised an almost \$1 million upgrade to its drop off and pick up facilities. I have witnessed how bad this area is myself. It was not long after I got elected that I went on one of the morning bus rides. After an hour and a half long trip from Pimpama, we then had to go around the block multiple times on Kumbari Avenue just to get into the school. What I am confused about, however, is that while the region papers state that \$980,000 out of the \$1 million project will be spent in 2021-22, the Capital Statement only lists the project as \$550,000, with \$539,000 to be spent in the upcoming year and no further funding allocated. I will be seeking clarification on this.

Years after the Commonwealth Games finished, the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct has still not seen any construction on the state owned sites there. I am pleased to see the EDQ commitment to get Proxima and the residential aged-care and integrated training facility built, and I will be watching carefully to see construction start this year as promised in the budget. I do have to confess to the House that I got it slightly wrong last time I raised this here when I said—

The closest thing to work being undertaken is some trees being planted and the installation of signage to rebrand the area.

In the last month we have actually seen some work done. We have had a fence installed, we have got some lights and there is a car park being put in one of the empty blocks. I actually think this is a good use of space considering nothing else is happening in that area, but what I do not understand is when I proposed to allow NightQuarter—a fantastic live music venue which we have sadly since lost to the Sunshine Coast—to temporarily move there until permanent leases were established, the government criticised the idea because it did not fit into the health and knowledge category. I am not sure what has changed in the last two years, but the government have really lost their vision if they think a car park is considered to be health or knowledge.

At the Gold Coast University Hospital, the upgrades announced in 2019 to the mental health unit have been a long time coming, with just over 40 per cent of the funds allocated in the upcoming year. This unit cannot come fast enough with the demand we are seeing for these services, and I hope to see it opened in the 2022-23 financial year. The staff there, who do a fantastic job, will very much appreciate it.

There is \$1 million to the Queensland Police Service for the knife detector wandering trial. This was in response to the campaign by the Jack Beasley Foundation to 'detect knives, save lives'. This money will cover operational costs. This is things like overtime for the police who are undertaking the wandering trial in Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach in the safe night precincts so they can do enough wandering over the next 12 months to get good data for the review, which is also covered in this funding. This was a big win for the Beasley family and our community, and I am so proud to support them. There is so much more work to do in terms of education programs.

I was also disappointed to see the Female Facilities Program coming to an end after this financial year as I have got two clubs which desperately need this funding. Southport Sharks and Labrador Tigers are both looking to expand their female facilities and they need this government to back them up.

I strongly support the opposition leader's proposal for a parliamentary budget office. It will provide transparency and clarity over budget policies for both sides of the House to get the most fiscally responsible policies put forward. We have seen it work very well federally and there are other jurisdictions at a state level with similar set-ups. I think this is a case of 'Why not?' Why be scared of

more oversight? Why be worried if you have nothing to hide? The only reason Labor are unlikely to adopt this before we have a chance to is that they are scared of having the lens put over many of their funding arrangements.

I will now turn to the areas I cover in my shadow ministerial role. From the outset, I will say once again that Labor is a lot of talk with very little action. I will start with the Carbon Reduction Investment Fund. In my search for the money attached to this flagship program—the biggest environmental spend in the budget—I went back to the minister's 'simple terms' explanation when I questioned her on this yesterday. There is no funding allocated to this fund over the next four years. How can you make a return from zero dollars of investment? There is no detail about what will be in this fund. All we know is that there is no money in the budget over the forward estimates.

This fund is apparently being set up to ensure the viability of the Land Restoration Fund. The only thing that threatens the Land Restoration Fund is this government's inability to deliver it. Barely one-quarter has been allocated since it was announced back in 2017. Queenslanders deserve better from this government—which pretends to care about climate action but delivers with empty funds.

When it comes to waste, the removal of the annual payment to local governments for the waste levy is a clear broken promise. The statement from the LGAQ yesterday was strongly against this, and when there has been little to no communication it is no wonder why. The government has said it is because they are reviewing the levy, but as the LGAQ has said today—

Rather than using the regular legislative review process to break a promise to Queenslanders, the LGAQ calls on the Government to use that review to identify concrete ways to increase recycling, reduce landfill and achieve a zero waste future.

The current waste levy included a 70 per cent commitment to go towards reducing the impact felt by these programs to ease the transition. However, when you look at the expense measures for this waste management and resource recovery program, only 55 per cent of that revenue has been allocated. Once you take out those annual payments to local governments, this drops again to just six per cent. If this money is being spent elsewhere on waste management, I would welcome clarity from the minister because at this stage it does not appear the government is keeping its commitment. This shows the waste levy has nothing to do with the environment; it is simply a cash grab.

The further issue with the scheme is that currently local governments have no directions or guidelines about how they use the annual payments to reinvest in waste resource recovery or for communication programs. At the moment they are essentially just paying people to generate waste. I think the LGAQ is right to say the review should be focused on concrete ways to reduce waste and on supporting local governments to develop the infrastructure they need within their communities.

I have spoken before about my passion for FOGO, organic waste processing. It is a revolution in rubbish that we need to get on board with. The minister has announced a handful of small trials with little clarity over how those particular local governments were chosen. In other states we are seeing tens of millions of dollars being spent on this. In New South Wales just over the weekend their new Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy confirmed that they have spent \$105 million to help councils introduce FOGO so far, that they are committing another \$65 million for five years from 2023 and that it will be mandatory for all households and businesses to have FOGO by 2030. Once again Queensland under Labor is being left behind.

The Recycling Modernisation Fund is not identifiable anywhere in these budget papers. I sincerely hope our contribution is hidden in there somewhere because we are the last state to sign up. I understand we are just waiting on an announcement of the state's signing of this deal and the sooner the better.

I want to talk briefly about hydrogen. Only one-quarter of the funding we were told would be committed to a Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund has been allocated over the forward estimates until 2025. There is \$1 billion missing.

The government has said they want to see 50 per cent renewable generation by 2030 in Queensland. With 8½ years to go, less than half of their target has been reached. I support the call of our shadow minister the member for Condamine to see their plan to achieve this. Again, the sooner, the better. Our carbon emissions are still higher than when Labor came to office based on the latest data in the state and territory greenhouse gas inventories.

In last year's budget I spoke about the lack of ambition in protected areas with a target of just a 0.01 per cent increase in the next year. I am sad to say this has happened again. They have once again put forward this very disappointing target of 0.01 per cent growth. If we continue to go at this rate of growth, that puts us within reach of the government's own target of 17 per cent of Queensland land area being protected in what I calculate to be around 800 years. That is how slow we are going with our increase in protected areas.

The Great Barrier Reef funding in this budget is best described as underwhelming. Despite the Minister for Environment's grand announcement of \$270 million in continuing the water quality program, there is only \$1.2 million allocated for this year. I wish there was more to say on this funding, but unfortunately yet again it is another example of empty promises and a continuation of the existing amounts of funding. It is business as usual basically.

To conclude, this is just a typical Labor budget of promising much but delivering little, particularly when it comes to the environment.