



Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**


**MEMBER FOR HILL**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 June 2021

## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

### **APPROPRIATION BILL**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (3.38 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the 2021-22 budget. Before I do, like others before me, I wish to note that there is one person that will be missing from the debate. I wish to extend my deepest condolence to family and friends of Duncan Pegg. I admired his humility and the way he conducted himself during his time as an MP. There is no doubt that he will be sorely missed.

On the surface this budget appears to have all the bells and whistles with promises of big spending and jobs, particularly in regional Queensland, but it is lacking in detail. There is also confusion about the statement that 61 per cent of the \$14.7 billion capital program will be spent in regional Queensland because those living in Mount Isa, Atherton or Ingham certainly would not classify the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and Logan as regional centres. The true regional Queensland spend is 40 per cent, with 60 per cent being spent in Brisbane and the south-east corner, which will not surprise regional Queenslanders.

When I was elected in 2004 there was a lot of excitement that the Galilee Basin would be opened up and most of the Galilee Basin was in my electorate. It is 17 years later and still there is nothing. There was a perception that coal would be exported right across the world. However, I note the budget states that coal royalties will increase to boost the Queensland economy. Can members imagine the massive return if the government built and owned a railway track in the Galilee Basin? However, there is still no railway track and the Bligh government sold the coal component of Queensland Rail—that is \$1.7 billion or \$1.8 billion a year that could have been coming back in revenue to Queensland. If we build a railway track in the Galilee Basin we could get another \$2 billion or \$3 billion in royalties, plus all the money we would receive through transport haulage. That is good budget economics.

There is also a lack of vision when it comes to nation-building projects. For the North Johnstone Transfer there is nothing in the budget. For Ootann Road there is nothing in the budget. For Big Rocks Weir there is nothing in the budget. For Hells Gates there is nothing in the budget. For the Hughenden irrigation project there is nothing in the budget. It is projects such as those that build economies and create jobs. If we cast our minds back to when the Burdekin Dam was constructed, we had the October stock market crash and Australia was struggling but North Queensland was thriving because we had just finished the construction of the Burdekin Dam. Funding to upgrade Ootann Road would allow access for road trains, opening up the cattle industry, improving the provision of supply and reducing costs to the cape, inland and gulf regions. Trucks would bypass the Atherton Tableland, reducing wear and tear on the roads and boosting the local economy.

There are some bright spots in the budget that my electorate expresses appreciation for. For Malanda State High School there is \$11.5 million for the expansion of classrooms and other infrastructure. That is great to see because that school has been growing in the past five years. They are rapt that they will be able to expand their classrooms to cater for students. There is \$500,000 for

the Atherton State High School and \$100,000 for the Atherton State School. For Malanda State School there is \$542,000 to enclose and cover the basketball court, which is good news because they use that court for their assemblies. Even in the rain they will be able to hold their assemblies, parades and sports activities. That is really good news for Malanda State School. For the Innisfail State School there is \$200,000. I have been working with the Goondi State School, which will receive half a million dollars in funding to upgrade their classrooms. They are over the moon because early last year the school suffered \$500,000 worth of damage as a result of crime. They are still getting over that and it is great to see that \$500,000 will go to that school.

The good news is that stage 1 of the Atherton Hospital upgrade is complete and stage 2 is underway with a total investment of \$18 million. The other day I ran into electricians from Babinda who are working on stage 2 of the project. As a result of the construction of stage 2 of the hospital, 30 Atherton concreters have jobs, as do local decorators. The upgraded hospital will also improve health care for the region. That is good news.

I note that \$40 million has been allocated to hospital parking projects in the state. I look forward to progress on that issue in terms of the upgrade of the Innisfail Hospital. Parking at the hospital has been an ongoing issue for years. I cannot walk down the street without meeting an elderly person who says that the biggest hassle they have now is not about the hospital but trying to get into the hospital. They have to walk 300 metres uphill, which is difficult if you are sick and frail. We want to continue those discussions with the minister and work with council. We have made some progress and even tabled a petition in parliament. We really want to progress that.

I will continue to push for funding for car parking, lighting and facilities upgrades to Castor Park at Mourilyan, near Innisfail. Castor Park has become a hub for soccer throughout the region. However, if you want to get to a soccer game at that hub you cannot get a car park. That definitely needs to be a priority so that parents and kids can be active and play their sports. That is definitely something that we will be pushing for.

There is \$4.2 million to upgrade the Kareeya Hydro Power Station, which is good news in regards to hydropower. It is also good news because the Kareeya Hydro Power Station is only 400 metres from Cardstone village where I was brought up. I know that funding means a lot to the people in the region and to myself. Well done for that funding.

The budget contains some positives for my electorate in terms of funding for road upgrades that are finishing and starting. The Henrietta Creek project has just finished. The great news about that project was that local contractors were given the jobs, not southerners who would not have a clue about the weather conditions and would have done a cheap job. In the Henrietta Creek area, in the last four years a project had to be done three times because they just did a quick fix. I fought three times to get funding for that project, but in good news local contractors have built a solid surface that has held up very well. There is \$7 million in funding for the East Feluga intersection upgrade. We have lobbied for that for years. It is good news because there have been a number of young deaths at that intersection and families are suffering. That project is just starting.

There is still very little funding provided for the upgrade of Innisfail Japoon Road and Silkwood Japoon Road. There is a bit of funding for the Innisfail to Wangan section, which is great news. However, that road is home to Paronella Park, which is the biggest tourist attraction in Queensland. If you are trying to get to the biggest tourist attraction in Queensland you have to drive on a pathetic and dangerous road. On Saturday in that same spot we will be celebrating the Mena Creek State School centenary. Funding is urgently needed to upgrade Innisfail Japoon Road and Silkwood Japoon Road, which are the access roads for the biggest tourist attraction in Queensland.

The Building our Regions program is a great initiative. I welcome the additional \$70 million investment, which will take the total investment for local government infrastructure to \$418,000. That is a good thing. My region has had a few wins in regards to the Building our Regions program. I believe it will be a win-win for council, particularly in terms of projects that are desperately needed and can be provided and supported by state government but initiated by local community and sporting groups. State members of parliament and councils can work together. That is good news.

Before I finish I would like to talk about social housing, health, the waste levy and youth detention. A sum of \$1.9 billion has been allocated to social housing but only 14 per cent of that is being delivered this year to build social housing dwellings, with the balance spread over a four-year period. In regional Queensland we are already beyond desperate with long waitlists and families living on the streets. We cannot wait four years for the delivery of more accommodation. I urge the minister to bring forward expenditure to deliver more emergency transitional and long-term housing to our fellow Queenslanders who are struggling.

Despite the announcement of big spending on health, the reality is that in regional Queensland we are losing our medical services. We are experiencing long waitlists and a severe lack of dialysis treatment. People have to travel long distances to get dialysis or even a doctor's script. Overall, I cannot see anything in this budget that will help improve health services in regional Queensland or stop the loss of medical services.

Only \$34 million per year over five years has been budgeted for palliative care. This is a disgrace. It is far short of the \$275 million required yearly which Palliative Care Queensland and AMA Queensland insist is required to meet basic care and protect our most vulnerable in our society. I have to question and wonder why the government is ignoring this advice and is drastically underfunding palliative care over the next five years.

I also note the Treasurer talked about the successful introduction of the state waste levy legislation in 2020. I doubt he would find anyone outside the south-east corner who agrees with him. This might have stopped the interstate trucks using Southern Queensland as a dumping ground; however, in the north of the state, which it does not affect, it is a ridiculous piece of legislation which has done nothing but increase the costs to struggling businesses and local councils which is passed on to the ratepayers. I know of one recycling business in my electorate who are at the point of closing their business because of the legislation, and others are just holding on.

I note the government has again ignored funding towards youth relocation sentencing and continues to pour millions of dollars into youth detention centres. Youth detention is not working as every day we see juvenile crime reports in the media. According to the government's Youth Justice Strategy's own figures, it costs \$1,500 per youth per day in detention. That is \$1,500 per youth per day in youth detention. Relocation sentencing could be delivered at a fraction of the cost and will actually reform repeat offenders. I wanted to bring this to the attention of the House.