




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning) (12.02 pm): I am sorry, Mr Speaker. I just had to wake myself up a little. I rise to support the Palaszczuk government's budget. It is clear from the rant we just heard from the Leader of the Opposition that those opposite have no plan for our pandemic recovery and no vision for our great state. Queensland has done remarkably well throughout the pandemic and we are now ahead of the rest of the world in our economic recovery. The budget data confirms that.

On almost every indicator we have seen this year Queensland is outperforming the rest of Australia. More jobs have been created in Queensland than in any other state. We have faster dwelling approvals growth than anywhere else in the country, with approvals for construction up 61 per cent since April. We have faster retail growth than the rest of Australia, with retail turnover up 6.2 per cent since the March quarter of 2020.

I have exciting news for the House. Hot off the press, the Treasurer has just handed this to me. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has just released the May labour force data, and it is very exciting indeed. It shows that employment increased by 32,300 people last month. That is more than a thousand jobs created each and every day. Queensland now has 84,900 more jobs than its pre-COVID level in March last year, the highest in the nation, and—wait for it, Madam Deputy Speaker—the unemployment rate in Queensland posted the largest fall in the nation, falling to 5.4 per cent—it is now below its pre-COVID level—and the Queensland labour market did all of this while the participation rate, the share of people in work or seeking work, increased to 66.6 per cent, almost half a percentage point above the national average.

The Palaszczuk government has added 337,400 jobs since we came to office. Our economic recovery plan is working and it is proven in this data. Our budget continues that good work. I make the point that the Leader of the Opposition questioned the budget projection that we would achieve a five per cent unemployment rate over four years—we are now at 5.4 per cent in just one month.

Instead of seeing the incredible opportunities ahead of Queensland, all the Leader of the Opposition could do was talk down our great state. Whinge, whinge, whinge. Our economy is bouncing back, but he says it is sluggish. We are on track for five per cent unemployment, but he says he does not know what a reasonable unemployment target should be. We are growing at twice the national average, but he spent the whole pandemic criticising our pandemic response which makes Queensland the safest state. We are the first large economy to project a surplus, but he says—well, it is not really clear what he says, because in one breath he says we should be spending more and in the next we should be cutting spending. That is right: he says we should spend more but borrow less.

Our world-class health system, which kept us safe from COVID and is the envy of the world, he insists is in crisis. The most important thing from here to get more people into jobs is confidence, and the Leader of the Opposition is doing everything he can to undermine that confidence. I guess Queensland is lucky; nobody knows who he is. Nobody is listening to him. In fact, we learned today that more people know the Premier's cat than know the Leader of the Opposition.

A government member: It's her mother's cat.

Dr MILES: It is her mother's cat; you are right. Mrs Palaszczuk's cat has a higher profile than the Leader of the Opposition. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition was asked if he would make cuts if he was in office, and he confirmed that he would. He said there would be cuts, but he would draw a line: the cuts would not be savage. There is a policy position for you. The LNP will make all the cuts they possibly can right up until just before they become savage. What kind of cuts does that mean they would make? Harsh cuts? Severe cuts? Devastating cuts? Cruel cuts?

A government member: Shrinkage cuts?

Dr MILES: Shrinkage cuts? Ruthless cuts? Crippling cuts? Dreadful cuts? Brutal cuts? They are all job cuts, no matter what he says. They would cut them just so long as they were not savage. Maybe they will dust off the old 'pain threshold ranking' that the Newman government's razor gang used. Do you remember that? Their cuts were ranked from one to four based on how painful they would be. We know they like to cut—that is in their DNA—but so is selling.

You will have noticed that in his speech the Leader of the Opposition criticised our move to ensure our titles office in Queensland can never be privatised. The only reason he would criticise that is so they could privatise it themselves. New South Wales and South Australia both privatised their land titles registries in 2017, Victoria in 2018. We will not do that because we do not privatise things, but also because when New South Wales did it their new private operator increased some fees by 1,900 per cent. That is what you get when you sell off your titles office.

By opposing our steps to keep the titles office in public hands, the Leader of the Opposition is keeping his options open so that he can privatise it down the track—to make the same mistake that New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia have made. We know they wanted to do that last time because it was recommended by the infamous Costello Commission of Audit, which recommended the mass privatisation of state owned assets, including the outsourcing of registry services.

The Leader of the Opposition questioned the independently verified valuation of our Titles Registry. He cannot accept that we have the best run, most efficient titles office in the country and that we should keep it in public hands. The centrepiece of the member for Broadwater's alternative budget is a new bureaucracy doing the exact same job that we have Queensland Treasury for. It is an insult to the hardworking officers of Queensland Treasury that he would stand in this place and question their independence—that because he cannot understand the budget papers, he insists they must be wrong; that because it does not suit his narrative that Queensland is stuffed, he thinks the Treasury must be wrong.

It is an extraordinary attack by an opposition on the Treasury itself to say that they cannot be trusted to prepare the budget papers. This is because those opposite only care about themselves and political pointscore. They do not care about Queenslanders. We did not hear a single pledge from them on the things that matter to people—health, keeping people safe, education, infrastructure, the things that improve the lives of people in our state. They are not fit to govern.

As he spoke, we could see those opposite thinking, 'Jeez, even the member for Nanango was better than this.' We could see members on the backbench thinking, 'The member for Everton might not have been that good at maths, but at least he knew how the budget worked. The member for Clayfield might have put a for sale sign on everything but he wouldn't stoop to blaming the Treasury for the bits of the budget he couldn't understand.' There is plenty there to ponder for those opposite today.

There is no question that the Palaszczuk government is committed to creating jobs for Queenslanders and continuing to deliver Queensland's plan for economic recovery. Our world-class health response has provided us with an opportunity to attract and create jobs, grow our traditional industries and attract new ones. This budget is a great example of how we will capitalise on those opportunities. The \$3.34 billion Queensland Jobs Fund is about encouraging investment in Queensland and giving industry the support and confidence they need to establish and grow their businesses here. The fund contains \$2 billion dedicated to creating renewable energy and hydrogen jobs. A hydrogen revolution is coming and Queensland is well placed to become a world leader in this new industry. This investment will create jobs and support our government owned businesses to expand ownership of renewable energy and storage to deliver on our 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030.

It will also allow us to make more things right here in Queensland. We do not want to invest in renewable energy just so we can ship it overseas; we want to capitalise on this cheap, clean energy boon to encourage local large-scale manufacturing. Right now, three-quarters of Tesla's lithium—the key ingredient in their lithium-ion batteries—is sourced from Australia as is more than one-third of its nickel. Globally, Australia is supplying 50 per cent of the world's lithium ore at a value of \$130 million, but we do not supply any of the refined product suitable for battery cells. If we did, the value of that product would be \$2.2 billion. Our Renewable Energy Fund will allow us to build up this industry.

A new \$350 million Industry Partnership Program will provide tailored assistance packages to strengthen local supply chains and grow the footprint of Queensland's industries while creating 2,800 new jobs in industries like advanced manufacturing, hydrogen, biofutures, biomedical, defence, aerospace, space, resource recovery and mining equipment, technology and services. It will deliver cross-sectoral opportunities that unlock growth and shore up supply chains. It will allow us to ramp up Australia's capacity to develop our biomedical industry and manufacture potentially lifesaving vaccines with the development of a new Translational Manufacturing Institute at the existing TRI.

This budget also delivers on the next stage of Queensland's economic recovery plan. It includes funding to address land supply challenges. People and businesses are moving to Queensland in droves because they know it is one of the safest places in the world to live, work and raise a family. This budget includes \$10.5 million from the Building Acceleration Fund to support the development of trunk infrastructure at the Growth Areas Team's first pilot site within the emerging community of Caboolture West. The Building Acceleration Fund is also supporting the construction of new roads, including opening up approximately 1,700 residential lots plus retail development at Bahrs Scrub and funding to unlock the next stage of Yarrabilba.

There is also \$320 million to extend the highly successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, \$140 million for the Back to Work program and \$330 million for the Great Barrier Reef to support our tourism jobs there. One of the greatest job-creating initiatives of our government—our signature \$1 billion Works for Queensland program—sees the 65 councils outside the south-east Queensland corner benefitting enormously through building and maintaining community infrastructure. Since its inception, Works for Queensland has created or supported more than 21,600 jobs. I am very much looking forward to announcing the projects to be funded in the South East Queensland Community Stimulus Program shortly. Additionally, \$41 million has again been committed to assist our Indigenous councils to deliver general and essential public services. Already through this program, over \$348 million has been approved towards 271 projects.

I am proud to say that this is a budget that also delivers on our commitments to the people of Murrumbidgee. There is funding for our schools, more money for our hospitals and more support for our community's small businesses. We have seen more money for schools across my electorate, including Dakabin State School, Hercules Road State School, Kallangur State School, Mango Hill State School, Mango Hill State Secondary College and Undurba State School. The satellite hospital in Pine Rivers will continue to move ahead quickly. The Moreton Connector—a once-in-a-lifetime infrastructure piece—has also received early funding. That road will transform our community, connecting Mango Hill and Griffin, massively upgrading the Bruce Highway capacity and delivering on- and off-ramps at Murrumbidgee Downs.

This is a budget that delivers on core Labor values, delivering on education and on health care. We know that, for some communities, health care and social services are difficult to access, particularly for school aged children. Families in Dakabin reached out to us to get better health services, and I am proud that the Dakabin health hub—located between the Dakabin State High School and the Dakabin State School—will deliver much needed health services to those communities.

All of these initiatives in my community and right across the state are ensuring improved livability, stronger local economies and more jobs in every Queensland community. This budget allows us to leverage the incredible head start given to us by our health response to build back better and to deliver good, stable jobs and vibrant, thriving communities for all Queenslanders.