



Speech By  
**Trevor Watts**


**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

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 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (4.58 pm): Before I start, let me give my condolences to Peggy's family and friends. We did not agree on much and we would often dispute each other's versions of how we should move forward, but he cherished this place and he should be remembered in it. So thank you, Peggy.

I rise to make a contribution to the budget debate. The first things I want to talk about are a couple of big-ticket items. These are statewide pieces of infrastructure. Inland rail is something that we need to hurry up and get on with because it will make a big difference in my region. The government should make sure that it does all it can to enhance the speed with which this gets delivered, particularly because the closure of the Acland coalmine is going to drastically affect the current railway line that is 150 years old.

Once the Acland mine shuts, the maintenance on that rail line will have to be borne by the current users. I do not see any additional allocation in this budget for that maintenance. I am very concerned as to how that will leave the rail line. I ask the minister to look at that. I thank the agriculture minister for the spending on the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in Tor Street. It is a good facility. Allocating funding to keep it up to date is good because it is getting a bit tired. I would encourage the minister to move the whole department there because Toowoomba would love to be the home of DAF.

I note in the budget there are some local sporting facilities that have been upgraded for girls and women in particular. There is one in Toowoomba—not in my electorate—that I would encourage the minister to look at. The local club at Heritage Oval, home to the South Toowoomba Australian Football Club—the Bombers—the Toowoomba Bears Rugby Union Club and TCI cricket, could benefit from this program. I encourage the minister to look at that facility. Facilities at Captain Cook Reserve, home to the Garden City Raiders and Toowoomba Cricket, would also benefit. At Rockville Park, where the Diggers play cricket—and we delivered nets for them a number of years ago—and the Toowoomba Tigers Aussies Rules team play, the girls' and ladies' game is growing fast and the facilities were not built for ladies. It would be good to see upgrades there. Likewise at Commonwealth Oval where the Rangers play baseball and the Willowburn Soccer Club play, and the Toowoomba Sports Ground where South-West Queensland Thunder and the Southern Suburbs Rugby League team play it would be good to see more money invested in facilities, particularly coming up to the Olympics.

There is some funding for social housing in the budget, which unfortunately falls tens of thousands of dollars short of what is required. Whilst that leaves many people homeless, I encourage the people at Lifeline Darling Downs, Derek and Matt, to continue doing the great job they are doing to find housing in the public and private sectors for those who are homeless and in hard times. Likewise at Base Services with Nat and Tiff. Nat will soon be having his annual sleepout and I will go and sleep out with him to raise money. They provide a great service for people who are homeless and

unfortunately will not benefit from the very frugal amount that is being spent on housing in Toowoomba. Emerge, run by Jen Shaw and Penny Hamilton, do a fantastic job with young people in particular and I would encourage the minister to have a look at what they provide and how they operate. Likewise Protea Place looks after women who have experienced domestic violence and who are in danger of becoming homeless or are homeless. These are all facilities in our local region that could benefit from an extra injection of funds into social housing.

Let me turn to a couple of topics that I am concerned about. Everyone here has heard me talk about the Toowoomba Hospital. It is great news that we have \$40 million for the day surgery. That will take some pressure off day surgery. This in no way will help us from falling off the cliff of disaster around the services we have. I received an email just today from someone who works at the current hospital saying that the medical students do not know how to use the equipment they have there because the equipment they are trained on is so much more modern. They have to go through a familiarisation exercise in the emergency department. Our hospital is dated, our population is getting older and it is now time to build the new hospital. It will be an expensive proposition. I would encourage the health minister to look at a public-private partnership for funding solutions because we cannot wait any longer.

The second road to Highfields connecting Boundary Street and Old Goombungee Road is a critical piece of road infrastructure that has been completely overlooked. It is very disappointing because the New England Highway is choking. It is making it very difficult for all the people in North Toowoomba and Harlaxton to go about their daily business because of the traffic coming in from Highfields. It means that the people from Highfields are taking a lot longer to get home and to work. They are burning fuel. None of this is good for anybody. It is time to do a business case and secure the land for Boundary Street to connect up to the back of Highfields so that we can futureproof the growth in that suburb. It will also allow people from Highfields to access the second range crossing much easier.

I thank the minister for some education funding. Wilsonton State School is a great state school in my area. It has received funding. It was already announced at the election, but it is good to hear it confirmed. It will get arts and trades classrooms. I also thank the minister for the arts facility received last year by Toowoomba State High. At the election Toowoomba West Special School was concerned that only half the funding they needed for their projects and classrooms was in the election commitment. It is good to see some additional funding in this budget. Those are good things that I thank the minister for. There is one little school that I would like the minister to look at, one that has a lot of Yazidis and new Australians. Its population has grown. It does not have an indoor hall. Toowoomba North State School could really do with some TLC. It does a fantastic job in what is one of the toughest demographics in my electorate. It certainly should receive some additional care and attention.

There are some items in the budget that are good. There are other items that I would like to see included. We have heard a lot of conversation about how a government asset, the Titles Office, might be worth a certain amount. The government says it is doing a great job. I say that this is a binge not a boom. Since the Palaszczuk government has been elected our debt has increased by \$22 million a day, 365 days of the year—there is not a day off for Christmas—for every year that those opposite have been here. When people say we do not have enough social housing, how much could you build in one day with that debt increase of \$22 million? When people are talking about road upgrades, how many road upgrades could you have completed with \$22 million—just one day of the debt loading? My electorate would nearly be paved with gold.

We have seen debt of \$52 billion racked up and what do we have to show for it? We have ambulance ramping, a hospital that is old and no longer a built environment that our hardworking doctors and nurses can provide the service in that they should, road networks that are overburdened and struggling to deal with the traffic and education facilities that have some great upgrades coming but could always do with some more. There are many things that we could have done with \$22 million a day. Let me be clear, the \$22 million a day does not include the little shell trick with the overvaluing of the Titles Office. People will say to me, 'But it has been valued by these people and those people'. What were the assumptions that those organisations were given to work out the valuation? I have only been in small business. I am just a humble hospitality guy. I have run a few pubs, a few cafes, that kind of stuff, but I can tell members now, I would never invest that amount of money to get that amount of return because there are many other businesses out there that would be a much better investment. I question the assumptions around the valuation.

Let me go back to the debt, because it is important. I am trying to help the people of my electorate and the people of Queensland understand what is going on. We have been bingeing not booming. We are spending not just the money of future generations but plenty more. Instead of spending an additional \$22 million a day, imagine if we could just get that to a \$10,000 surplus. We will save \$22 million plus \$10,000. How long would it take for us to get back to the debt level that the Palaszczuk government inherited when we left office? It would take 14,000 years.

They have been in government for six years and if we got to surplus, which is \$22 million away, it would take 14,000 years at \$10,000 a day surplus. That is the trouble that Queensland is in. That is why we need to look seriously at this budget and ask ourselves some questions. Where is the money going? I do not see the new hospitals. I do not see the new roads. I do not see all of the investment in the things that Queensland desperately wants. At \$22 million a day the Townsville stadium could have had been paid for in a week and a half. We could pay for the second M1 if we do not spend \$22 million a day more than we earn. That is the problem with a Labor government.

We have been told that this is a Labor budget and it sure is. Over the past six years their average scorecard shows that they have spent \$22 million more every single day on delivering worse health, worse roads and worse outcomes around crime for everybody in Queensland. Whether it be a helicopter for up north, a road in my electorate, a new hospital, new ambulances or more paramedics, teachers, nurses or doctors, let us think about what we could all do in our electorates with \$22 million a day, every single day, 365 days of the year for the past six years. We have to ask ourselves what we could do with that money and the people of Queensland also have to ask themselves what we could have been doing with that money. And then they should look at what we have done.

If the people of Queensland think that the \$22 million a day that they and future generations have invested in this government's leadership of the state and its governance of our finances is good value for money, good on them. However, by the time the next election comes round this equation will be worse and not better. I have not even gone into the raiding of the superannuation funds of public servants or the overvaluation. I am counting those things as read by the Treasurer, but still we spend \$22 million a day.

The kids at Toowoomba North State School just want a place to meet. We are not talking about much money. An hour of the overspending of this government would build their hall. If we do not spend that money for one hour, the kids would have a hall for 25 years. However, we do not have good management or good control. What we do have is a Treasurer who is too busy worrying about his social media platforms and whether he can trick everybody into thinking how clever he is. You do not have to be clever; you just have to spend less money than you earn. Unfortunately, this is a Labor budget and it is a terrible one.