



Speech By  
**Hon. Yvette D'Ath**


**MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 June 2021

## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

### **APPROPRIATION BILL**

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (12.56 am): I rise to make a contribution to the budget introduced by the Treasurer and commend him and his department on a strong Labor budget. The budget before us continues the Palaszczuk government's longstanding commitment to serve the people of Queensland. There are many great funding announcements in this year's budget, including a \$3.34 billion Queensland Jobs Fund to further stimulate job creation and industry development in Queensland as part of our economic recovery efforts from the global pandemic. We are investing over \$14.6 billion in this financial year in infrastructure projects right across our state, \$16.6 billion has been allocated to improve education outcomes for students and teachers, and \$1.9 billion has been committed over the forward estimates to support social housing.

In my mighty electorate of Redcliffe we will see the benefits of this funding. The Palaszczuk government is investing in the road infrastructure we need, including upgrades to the pedestrian facility at Anzac Avenue, Marine Parade and Redcliffe Parade intersections, putting signals at Oxley Avenue and Sydney Streets and improved safety measures on a number of intersections across the peninsula.

I am pleased that in this year's budget we are seeing funding for our local schools, including a brand new fence at Humpybong State School worth \$700,000; infrastructure enhancements at Clontarf Beach State High School and Clontarf Beach State School totalling nearly \$600,000; \$550,000 to upgrade learning spaces at Redcliffe State High School; and \$640,000 for enhancements, a new playground and fence at Woody Point Special School. I know the importance of a strong education and I am proud to be part of the Palaszczuk Labor government that invests not only in our education system but also in our broader social infrastructure.

In particular we are continuing to provide vital funding to our frontline community organisations such as Chameleon Housing, which is receiving nearly \$650,000 in this year's budget to deliver specialist homelessness services. I want to give a shout-out to all the community groups in Redcliffe, including Carmel at Chameleon Housing, who do an incredible job and work every day for the benefit of our fellow citizens. On behalf of the Palaszczuk government I say thank you.

I am thrilled that we have extended our Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. As the former minister for training and skills who brought back Skilling Queenslanders for Work which was savagely cut by the LNP government, I have seen firsthand how this program helps Queenslanders and changes lives for the better.

The Moreton Bay region alone will see nearly \$8 million allocated for cybersecurity training in addition to other training opportunities. There is dignity in work and I am proud that this government is investing in job-creating programs that will help not only residents in my community but all Queenslanders no matter where they live. A sum of \$400,000 has been allocated for the Scarborough harbour master plan. Last week I was pleased to join the Redcliffe Chamber of Commerce, business

owners and local leaders on our mighty Moreton Bay to announce that consultation will commence in August. Consultation will be extensive, ensuring our community can have their say. I look forward to working with my community on this exciting new opportunity.

Since 2015 we have restored the LNP's savage cuts to the budget and the front line, but what did we learn recently from the Leader of the Opposition? Recently he was asked, 'Are you ruling out cuts?' The Leader of the Opposition said, 'I am ruling out being savage.' In his budget speech he said that a budget should give people hope. What does this mean? Does it mean that instead of the LNP sacking 4,400 health workers they would sack only 3,000? Does it mean instead of sacking 1,800 frontline nurses and midwives they will sack only 1,000?

**Mr Bleijie:** You cut waste.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I take that interjection. I would love for them to define what they think is 'waste'. This is someone who said of previous health cuts, 'Whilst you have to feel for those involved, you have to live within your means.'

Throughout the pandemic our approach has been focused on two things: keeping Queenslanders safe and employed. The success of that approach has been plain today. Queensland's unemployment rate has dropped to 5.4 per cent. That is a vindication not only of the government's decision to follow the Chief Health Officer's health advice but also the strong economic recovery plan we took to the last election.

It is clear that those opposite cannot read a budget. They claim that the health capital budget has been cut. That is incorrect. When the one-off leasing commitment for leasing STARS is taken into consideration, the increase to the health capital budget is \$260 million, or 23.7 per cent. The LNP said \$2 billion has not been allocated to build a single new hospital. That is incorrect. That \$2 billion is already being used to deliver Mater Springfield and the Toowoomba day surgery, and business cases are underway for new hospitals in Bundaberg, Toowoomba and Coomera. What single hospital did the LNP build? None!

**Mr Bleijie:** The Sunshine Coast University Hospital.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I take that interjection. That was not your plan.

**Mr Bleijie:** I turned the sod—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order, member for Kawana.

**Mrs D'ATH:** It started before they came into government. Those opposite complain about regional health investment but the record reflects that the Palaszczuk government is a friend of the regions. We have just opened a new hospital in Roma and it should be noted that the last hospital that was built in Roma was built by Labor as well. Major upgrades are occurring in Cairns, Mareeba, Atherton, Sarina and the list goes on. The LNP's only infrastructure project was 1 William Street in Brisbane.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Speaker has reviewed and approved my speech on the budget for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*.

*The speech read as follows—*

The Member for Broadwater declared that he would be pursuing a political approach based more upon consensus than conflict, be more collaborative than adversarial, be supportive of policy framed to advance the public interest rather than just stand in opposition for its own sake.

What we heard this week was his final descent into the default LNP culture of complaint and negativity.

It must be particularly dispiriting for the 90,000 Queenslanders who go to work every day in our health system, and especially for our frontline health workers who have worked so tirelessly to keep their fellow Queenslanders safe, to have their efforts so relentlessly disparaged by the LNP.

When we are rolling out the vaccine, when we most need Queenslanders to trust the clinical advice, the LNP has embarked on a deliberate campaign to undermine public faith in our health system.

It is misguided, it is reckless, it is dangerous.

Australians enjoy access to one of the best health systems in the world, serviced by a highly trained, highly committed, and highly professional workforce.

The more the LNP try to tear it down, the more vigorously we will rise to its defence.

Last sitting, the Leader of the Opposition led his hapless team in a chorus of misinformed outrage over what he asserted were impending cuts to the health system.

This week, we announced yet another record health budget.

Far from cuts to their allocation, every HHS has received a boost to their budget, with the aggregate increase across HHSs totalling \$662 million or 4.2%.

If the Leader of the Opposition were genuine in his concern about the sustainability of our health system, he would publicly condemn the latest attempts by the Morrison Government to undermine the viability of Medicare by increasing the costs to patients across a range of surgeries—including cardiac.

The inevitable consequence of these changes will be to reduce revenue to public hospitals and increase the number of people coming onto the public elective surgery waiting list.

Being lectured by the LNP on health is like being lectured by Clive Palmer on truth in advertising.

If the Leader of the Opposition wants to see a health system in crisis, then he need only reflect upon his time as a cabinet minister during the dark, miserable years of the Newman Government, when they sacked nurses, went to war with doctors, and—in yet another example of their disregard for expert health advice—they closed the Barrett Adolescent Centre with such tragic consequences.

The philosophical and ideological divide between this government and those opposite is most evident in the way we consider funding to health services.

They see health as a cost to the budget.

We see it as an investment in people.

We are all aware of the financial wrecking ball COVID-19 has swung through budgets around the world.

And yet, in spite of the constrictions imposed upon the State's finances by that enormous public health challenge, the Palaszczuk Government has once again delivered a record health budget.

This year's operational allocation of \$20.8 billion represents an increase of 3.4% on last year's budget and over 53% on the final budget delivered by the Newman Government.

This means that the average annual investment in the delivery of health services to Queenslanders has risen by over \$1 billion a year since the election of the Palaszczuk Government.

I have never denied that our health system is facing enormous challenges.

It is, as AMA President Dr Omar Korshid observed on ABC radio recently, a problem confronting every jurisdiction.

This year's allocation includes an additional \$482.4 million to support performance in our system as it continues to confront the pressures of a rising population, increasing longevity and declining membership rates in Private Health Insurance.

This investment will build on the work already underway to ease congestion in our EDs and stabilise elective surgery wait times.

I have spoken previously about the impact the National Cabinet decision to suspend elective surgery had on our waiting lists, and the success of our \$250 million investment in bringing down the number of Queenslanders waiting longer than clinically recommended for their surgery.

This funding is already showing results with elective surgery long waits reduced to 1,827 as at 1 May 2021, down from 5,166 as at 1 July 2020.

In 2016, we implemented the Specialist Outpatient Strategy to reduce the number of those waiting longer than clinically recommended for a specialist appointment.

As a result of that strategy, and in the face of significant year-on-year demand, there are over 30,000 fewer Queenslanders on the long wait list compared to the number we inherited from the Newman Government.

It is a matter of public record that our First Nations' People continue to have health outcomes below that of non-indigenous Australians.

Whilst there has been some quantifiable improvement in some areas, such as infant mortality rates, there remains significant work to be done to improve the lived experience and life expectancy of our indigenous communities.

This budget looks to build on the investment we have made in improving health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders by providing an additional \$37.8 million to further support maternity services, workforce training and capacity, and embed the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health Connect Plus Program in South East Queensland.

Demand for health services is growing rapidly, and we continue to look for ways to increase our delivery capacity through the development of innovative partnerships.

We recently announced \$177 million over the next four years to purchase public health services at the Phase 2 expansion of the Mater Hospital at Springfield.

This new facility will add 174 beds to available capacity in the Ipswich corridor, and will provide enhanced access to a range of health care.

This budget has allocated new funding of \$1.3 billion to health infrastructure, an increase of 23.6% on last year, including:

- \$103 million towards the expansion of Caboolture Hospital
- \$92 million towards the expansion of Ipswich Hospital
- \$79 million towards the expansion of Logan Hospital
- \$8 million for the upgrade of the Logan Hospital Maternity suite
- \$20 million for our building rural and remote health program, including upgrades to Camooweal, St George, Morven, Charleville and Blackwater health facilities

- \$7.7 million towards our accelerated expansion of the Cairns ED
- \$11 million for the Fraser Coast Mental Health project
- \$43 million for the Gold Coast Mental Health Unit
- \$1.2 million for Mackay Community Mental Health Unit Refurbishment
- \$16 million towards the Redlands Hospital Expansion
- \$5.7 million for the Rockhampton Drug Rehabilitation Unit
- \$29 million for the Cairns Mental Health Unit
- \$105 million towards the roll out of our \$265 million Satellite Hospital program
- \$233 million for the sustaining capital program
- \$5.9 million towards the \$42 million Toowoomba Day surgery
- \$12.4 million for Windorah Primary Health care; and
- \$12.5 million for the Woorabindah Multipurpose Health Clinic.

We are creating a Hospital Building Fund, a \$2 billion investment to support capital and operating expenditure to improve bed availability and fortify our health system against the pressures of anticipated future demand.

This capital investment will support jobs, generate additional capacity, and improve access for Queenslanders to high-quality health services.

The Palaszczuk Government will always back our hard-working paramedics.

This year we are investing \$993.3 million into the Queensland Ambulance Service, an increase of over \$54 million, or 5.8% and employing an additional 100 ambulance officers.

On top of that, I was also pleased to announce that we will be employing an additional 60 officers over and above our commitment to deliver 475, taking the total to 535.

In 2021-22, the QAS will invest \$61.8 million in capital purchases to support essential frontline services to provide the highest possible quality pre-hospital emergency and non-emergency care and services to the community.

Highlights of the capital program include \$8.3 million to progress the planning and construction phases for new ambulance stations at:

- Caloundra South,
- Petrie (Lawnton),
- Morayfield,
- Ormeau,
- Ripley,
- the new Burdell ambulance station; and
- Local Ambulance Service Network office, and a replacement ambulance station at North Rockhampton.

There is \$9.9 million for redevelopment of the Cairns Ambulance Station and Operations Centre, Southport Ambulance Station and Gold Coast Operations Centre, and refurbishment of the Rockhampton Ambulance Station and Operations Centre.

\$29 million is also allocated to commission 136 new and replacement ambulance vehicles, including the continued rollout of power assisted stretchers and \$1.5 million for the fit-out of Emergency Response Vehicles.

As recent events have shown, the shadow of COVID-19 still hovers over Queensland.

But Queenslanders are resilient.

Each time we are confronted with a natural disaster, our community pulls together.

And it's that spirit, that fortitude, that Queenslanders brought to bear throughout the COVID pandemic.

We worked together, followed the health advice and crushed the COVID-curve.

Queensland has one of the most open economies on the planet, thanks to the hard work of the Queenslanders.

But we are not out of the woods yet.

The community cases that travelled into our state remind us that this pandemic persists.

To truly crush COVID, we need to ensure that Queenslanders are getting vaccinated.

Our vaccine rollout has not been without adversity either.

The ATAGI advice regarding the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine required our health staff to recalibrate our rollout. And I note the newly updated advice released by the Commonwealth today. While I have no doubt that Queensland will take this latest development in our stride, it demonstrates the ever-changing nature of this vaccine rollout.

The resilience of our health workforce has shone through.

We have already adjusted our rollout and have been able to administer the Pfizer vaccine in every HHS across this State.

Our numbers have skyrocketed, yesterday we administered over 14,000 doses of the vaccine in one day—our highest number yet.

And thanks to this most recent Palaszczuk Labor budget, our vaccine rollout will be spurred on with an additional investment of \$168 million.

The most potent instrument we possess in promoting social equity is the social and financial capital we invest in providing affordable and readily accessible health care.

In this budget, we reaffirm our commitment to Queenslanders.

I commend the budget to the House.