



Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**

**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**


---

Record of Proceedings, 23 June 2022

## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

### **APPROPRIATION BILL**

#### **REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (4.25 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the 2022-23 state budget. This is a typical Labor budget with new taxes—a racing tax, a payroll mental health levy, a coal royalty increase and confirmation of a land tax on land owners resident in other states. The Labor Treasurer promised 26 times there will be no new or increased taxes. This budget, from this Labor Treasurer, is a broken promise—a broken promise to Queenslanders. Despite these new and increased taxes and huge revenue windfalls, the roads out in the regions are falling apart, the health system is in crisis, ambulance ramping is up to 42 per cent, and the housing crisis is gripping the state with families living in tents and cars.

I wish to commend the opposition leader, David Crisafulli, and the shadow Treasurer, David Janetzki, on their budget reply speeches. They have pointed out how this budget is in disrepair and how this budget will increase the cost of living and inflationary pressures facing Queensland households. They have pointed out that at a time of increasing interest rates, there is no plan to retire debt. The era of low interest rates is over. As a result, debt continues to grow relentlessly. It is now \$110 billion and will be \$129 billion by the end of the forwards. This is up from \$72 billion in 2015, an increase of 80 per cent. Additionally, after the fake privatisation of the titles registry last year, specifically to lower net debt, net debt is set to triple over the forwards which will set off alarm bells at the rating agencies.

When a government has more debt, they pay more interest. Interest payments are forecast to almost double over the forwards, to reach \$2.9 billion per year. Reckless borrowing over years and years is finally taking its toll. The government's chickens have come home to roost.

The LNP leaders have pointed out that with this budget, there is a housing crisis and families are homeless, and I will come to the dire situation of Lynne Webb at Dalby later. If this budget is meeting expectations, why is the ambulance ramping 42 per cent in Queensland? I will come to the case of Nelson Neal from The Gums later. Why in this budget is there no plan to address the road maintenance backlog? Why do we have roads like the Roma-Condamine Road that are falling apart? They are narrower than the bike tracks in Brisbane and they are going from bitumen back to dirt. If this budget is about health, why are babies being born on the side of the Warrego Highway and regional hospitals go for weeks without doctors? I want to put a shout-out to Bryson Head, the new member for Callide, because I know he will fight for maternity services to be returned in Chinchilla.

Firstly, I want to make mention of Queensland's hardworking local governments and I acknowledge the tremendous efforts they have made throughout the pandemic and the summer of natural disaster events. During these events local governments did what they do best: they managed

these disasters. On behalf of this parliament I would like to thank every mayor, every councillor and every council worker because I know they have had many sleepless nights throughout the 2021-22 disasters.

I do ask: if this budget and the economy are going so well, why are 60 per cent of councils rated as medium or high risk of becoming financially unsustainable? When we delve into the programs that support local governments we see the story. The sacred cow, Works for Queensland, has been cut back by 40 per cent. Councils will not be able to support 26,000 jobs given this funding cut. Over the forward estimates there is only \$190 million remaining in this program, which equates to only \$67 million per year over the three years of the remaining program.

The president of the LGAQ and the Sunshine Coast Council Mayor, Mark Jamieson, said he was disappointed that the budget misses the mark on the restoration of Works for Queensland funding to \$100 million a year. He said—

This program is critical to the liveability of Queensland's communities ... 60 per cent of the state's councils remain at medium or high risk of becoming financially unsustainable.

Last year \$30 million was allocated to the Indigenous Councils Critical Infrastructure Program. This has been reduced in this budget to \$22 million that is available to these Indigenous councils. These are councils whose mayors raise with me the struggles they have with housing, the overcrowding and the frustration they have with this government that is not delivering housing to their communities. This is not the way to close the gap for these Indigenous communities and they deserve better.

This budget does provide \$672 million in up-front advance waste levy payments over four years.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): Order, members. I want to hear the member on her feet.

**Ms LEAHY:** We should, however, remember the fight that councils had with the state Labor government who last year ceased to provide a budget commitment to provide these payments to 39 local governments beyond 2022. Councils nearly ended up having to administer a rubbish tax on behalf of the state. The \$70 million towards the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme, commonly known as TIDS to local government, has not increased since 2015. With escalating construction costs, this allocation has decreased in real terms.

I was disappointed there was no recognition of volunteers, or the 2021-22 weather events, local government or councils in the Treasurer's budget speech. Of Queensland's 77 local government areas, 66 have been activated for various joint state-Commonwealth DRFA assistance in response to disasters. Some have had four successive flood events. I acknowledge the \$741 million Resilient Homes Fund, which is jointly funded by the Queensland and Australian governments. It is available to homeowners to bolster resilience across 37 council areas. However, the eligibility criteria for this fund is still not publicly known, meaning that those impacted cannot go to the bank or make informed decisions about the eligibility criteria.

With 60 per cent of the state's councils remaining at a medium or high risk of becoming financially unsustainable, it is disappointing that this government is pursuing a boundary review between the Rockhampton and Livingstone councils, which will negatively impact on the financial position of the Livingstone council. Should the boundary review be implemented, the Queensland Treasury financial assessment states that there will be a \$150 rate hike for more than 16,000 Livingstone families in the first year and that rates will increase to \$250 a year by 2030. Queensland does not need more councils in the financial unsustainable category and the Central Queensland region needs two strong councils, not one weak one and one strong one.

The amount of \$150 might not mean much to the Premier, but it means a hell of a lot to Queensland families in the Livingstone council area. A total of 417 people have signed the petition to save the Livingstone lifestyle, and I table the names of those who have signed the petition.

*Tabled paper:* Nonconforming petition regarding saving the Livingstone lifestyle [919](#).

The LNP will fight for these ratepayers and it is disappointing that the Labor government is not doing that.

As I said earlier, housing is in crisis and it is at a crisis point in my electorate. At any one time in the community—for instance, St George—there may be only two properties to rent and in some cases there is very little to purchase. I received this email last week from Lynne Webb, whose family in Dalby is soon to be homeless. It states—

Thank you for your return email, I have been proactive in trying to find a suitable home for our family with no success.

Despite asking prior to moving for long leases which have been verbally agreed to, the homes have either been sold shortly after moving in, or as with this current property 6mths in we have a notice to vacate as the owners wish to move back in, I just want a home we can settle in and relax. We are a large family, 3 adults + carer 24/7 and the 3 little people plus Alanna, who has a specialist bed and chair ... We have been approved for community housing which would be great if there was any available, I have sent several emails to—

the minister's—

office with no response. I am feeling very overwhelmed at the moment.

I, too, have sent letters to the minister's office in relation to Lynne's circumstances. I sincerely hope the government does find some housing that is appropriate for Lynne's family. However, there are families like Lynne's who are desperate for housing right across my electorate. If this budget is delivering housing, why can't Lynne and her family not find a rental or some sort of accommodation suitable to them in Dalby?

The Premier said yesterday that health is front and centre of this budget. Where are the doctors in our regional hospitals if health is front and centre of this budget? These hospitals across my electorate have had days and weeks without doctors. The Mungindi Hospital was without a doctor for 13 days in October 2021. The Augathella Hospital was without a doctor for five days in October 2021 and I was advised that Augathella was without a doctor during Easter 2022 when they had their rodeo. Cunnamulla was without a doctor for 12 days in December 2021 and January 2022. Quilpie was without a doctor for 15 days in January and February this year. Quilpie will not have had a doctor for 63 of the 210 days from January 2022 to 1 August 2022. They are a one-doctor shire and it is a two-hour drive to the nearest town to see a doctor. Surat was also without a doctor prior to Easter 2022.

Communities like Mungindi and Dirranbandi were isolated by floodwaters with no doctors at their hospitals. When these communities have no doctors, they rely on emergency retrievals like the RFDS and LifeFlight for transport to larger hospitals. However, just because regional patients arrive via an emergency retrieval at a hospital does not mean they do not get ramped. Nelson Neal of The Gums fell from a horse breaking ribs and was transported from Chinchilla to Toowoomba by the RFDS. He spent an hour waiting for an ambulance at the Toowoomba Wellcamp Airport before being transported to the Toowoomba Base Hospital. If health is front and centre of this budget why is ambulance ramping at 42 per cent and people like Nelson waiting in planes at airports for hours before being transported to emergency health care?

If this budget was more about rolling out the bitumen than the red carpet we would see a plan to address the deferred road maintenance backlog. The estimated deferred road maintenance backlog for the Darling Downs-South-West region at 30 June 2021 rose to \$1.3 billion. The Darling Downs-South-West has the highest backlog of deferred maintenance of any region in the state. The Palaszczuk Labor government has been sitting on their hands when it comes to addressing the backlog in this region, and this budget does not fill me with hope that there is a plan to address that backlog.

Not only has the region got the highest backlog of deferred maintenance; we also have some of the highest numbers of road deaths. Warrego is rated by the RACQ in the top 10 for road fatalities and Callide tops the list. I know the new member for Callide, Bryson Head, who drives on these roads, will fight for better roads in the Callide electorate.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The House will come to order.

**Ms LEAHY:** There is a pattern here: a lack of road investment and high numbers of road fatalities. Rather than rolling out the red carpet to the federal Labor government, this state Labor government should be knocking on the door for the \$150 million of funding for the Remote Roads Upgrade Pilot Program.

Councils want to see \$8 million for the Warrie Gate Road, \$24 million for the Bollon Road and other strategic bitumen extensions in the Maranoa Regional Council. Some of these councils that were promised funding through this program will receive reductions in their FA grants. I cannot stress enough how important these road funds are to these Queensland councils.

The Treasurer has made a virtue of calling this a 'typical Labor budget'. It is typical, with new taxes and hikes and no plan for the delivery of better services. It ignores the needs of councils and those people who live in the regions.