




Speech By
Barry O'Rourke

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 26 October 2022

MOTION

Rockhampton Ring Road

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (5.40 pm): It may come as no surprise that I support the motion as amended by the minister. Can I set the record straight about the Rockhampton Ring Road? Like many in my community, I am disappointed by the federal government's decision to push back funding for the Rockhampton Ring Road due to the rapid rise in costs, worker shortages and our inflation problem. What is even more disappointing, but not surprising, is the way the opposition and the member for Capricornia have sought to spread unnecessary fear and misinformation about what is happening. They are trying to create false impressions that this project is not going ahead. This is simply false, and here are the facts.

The Palaszczuk government remains committed to the Rockhampton Ring Road, which remains in both the federal and state budgets. Across Queensland and throughout Australia, there are three things that are impacting upon construction costs—from the cost of renovating a home to the cost of building a highway: labour shortages are putting pressure on both the costs and schedule; costs of inputs, including energy, asphalt and steel have risen; and supply disruptions are putting pressure on schedules which in turn puts pressure on the cost.

Record employment levels in our region mean that the Rockhampton Ring Road workforce would be largely fly-in fly-out. Fly-in fly-out workforces in turn add substantial accommodation costs to the project and would only further inflame the housing constraints in our community. These factors have contributed to a reported \$700 million cost increase before contracts are signed. You simply cannot pull out \$700 million at the drop of a hat, especially when the—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I cannot hear the speaker at all. There is so much noise in the chamber.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Member for Nanango, you are warned. I gave an earlier ruling about hearing points of order in silence and you have continued to interject. The chamber was raucous and I was attempting to bring it to order. I would also like to provide a general warning to members that we will not be tolerating frivolous points of order this evening.

Mr O'ROURKE: You simply cannot pull out \$700 million at the drop of a hat, especially when the Albanese government has inherited an LNP debt of \$1 trillion. The federal Treasurer, Jim Chalmers, is trying to reduce inflammatory pressures on the market. That is the challenge of trying to govern responsibly—something that the member for Chatsworth does not have firsthand experience in.

The time frame is what I disagree with the federal government on. Under the budget, funding now comes in four years and I will advocate to see funding brought forward. The Treasurer, Jim Chalmers, last night indicated that the economy is expected to slow within the next two years while inflation is

expected to drop off by then, so I believe we should be looking at bringing funding forward. I think it is also important that we use this delay to develop a stronger housing plan around this project—to look at ways to limit the negative impacts on our market and perhaps even add to our permanent housing supply. Of course these issues were not an issue when those opposite were in government—when unemployment surged to 7.1 per cent under the LNP and the economy collapsed to 0.7 per cent.

Mr Crisafulli interjected.

Mr Bailey interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Member for Broadwater and Member for Miller, you are both warned. You continued to quarrel across the chamber. I have given previous rulings in relation to that.

Mr O'ROURKE: Among the 14,000 public servants they sacked were 700 RoadTek workers, 2,800 TMR workers and many Queensland Rail staff. Cut, sack and sell—that is who they are. I have been working hard with the member for Keppel to deliver for Central Queensland. This year's QTRIP secures: \$80 million to improve the Rockhampton-Yeppoon Road, which is jointly funded by the federal government; \$110 million in funding for the Capricorn Highway; and \$90 million for Bruce Highway improvements. I am so proud of our \$44 million Lawrie Street improvements in Gracemere. I am incredibly proud of the work we have been doing with Minister Bailey to revitalise the Rockhampton railyards, which I will have more to say about in the coming weeks. Talking about water infrastructure, Rookwood Weir was delivered in my first term, with \$376 million—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Rockhampton, I will bring you back to the motion.

Mr O'ROURKE: I am proud of what the Palaszczuk government has delivered. The member for Keppel and I work closely together for the betterment of our regions.