



Speech By  
**Bart Mellish**


**MEMBER FOR ASPLEY**

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2)**

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 **Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (4.42 pm): Every year some MPs are surprised by this bill and every year I am surprised that they are surprised. It is an annual process and it should not come as a shock. I was surprised to hear the member for Nanango banging on about properly funding projects and properly costing projects. We all remember her Bruce Highway funding and the Bradfield scheme fake funding which did not even last until the end of the election campaign before it was revealed how little there was for that. There were a couple of half-funded promises in my area, including the half funding of major road projects. The electorate clearly saw through that.

The economic policies of this government are helping our great state power forward. We have nation-leading interstate migration. We have nation-leading economic growth. We have nation-leading housing starts. We have nation-leading retail spending. We are the first of the major economies in Australia with a path back to surplus.

I believe there are three main reasons for the economic success that the state is experiencing. They are: we entered the pandemic in a strong position; the Premier and her team made the right calls at the right times during the heat of the pandemic; and we have a strong economic recovery plan to drive forward Queensland. We are leading the nation's recovery out of COVID-19. Our strong economic recovery has been built on our strong health response. That health response has allowed our economy to stay open until Queenslanders had sufficient access to vaccinations.

Another 17,000 Queenslanders found work in January—defying expectations of a decrease due to Omicron. Among the states, only Queensland and Western Australia recorded increases in employment in January. I was pleased to hear the Premier's announcement today regarding masks which we can do because of our management of the pandemic. Unlike states like New South Wales and Victoria, we have not had capacity restrictions for months. We have been able to get on with it.

Since COVID reached Queensland, our state has created over 124,000 jobs—more than any other state or territory. As I mentioned earlier, we are welcoming more interstate migrants than any other jurisdiction. We are responding to that growth with our \$50 billion infrastructure guarantee providing Queenslanders with the hospitals, schools, police stations, fire stations, ambulance stations and community facilities that they rightfully expect.

Our state's economy is growing. We have an annual economic growth rate of 6.1 per cent—well above Australia's 3.9 per cent GDP growth rate. Pre COVID, Queensland Labor governments were delivering surplus after surplus and we are back on track to get there again. We will be the first of the big economies to get back there. The LNP federally have not delivered a surplus since four Liberal prime ministers ago—Morrison, nope; Turnbull with Morrison as treasurer, nope; Abbott as prime minister and Joe Hockey, remember him, as treasurer, nope. In Queensland, of course the Newman government never delivered a budget surplus despite promising to do so.

The Appropriation Bill seeks approval of supplementary appropriations for unforeseen expenditure incurred by six departments in the 2020-21 financial year. The majority of the unforeseen expenditure arises from three departments. The increase from the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs is due to increased demand for out of care services in the child protection system and timing adjustments surrounding land transactions. The increases from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General are due to additional funding to meet the state's share of the Queensland flood class action settlement.

For Queensland Fire and Emergency Services the \$91 million is primarily for the COVID-19 response for quarantine accommodation costs, logistics and border control activities, additional firefighters and aerial firefighting costs. I note that for QFES, it looks like on a couple of fronts we are picking up the tab for the Prime Minister's failings yet again. We know he does not hold a hose and we know he refuses to back a dedicated aerial firefighting fleet. He of course leaves hotel quarantine completely to the states to manage and then attacks us at every step over initiatives such as Wellcamp, despite the federal government funding Howard Springs in the Northern Territory, a facility in Victoria and Pinkenba. Maybe before the 2032 Olympics we will see a sod turning at Pinkenba. Maybe it can be an Olympic event helping build Pinkenba. They might be able to get it done in two weeks, but I would not hold my breath.

The reasons for unforeseen expenditure can include additional, proactive decisions to increase spending on a new initiative, additional Commonwealth funding that needs to be either spent or passed on by the state, pull forwards in spending associated with programs being delivered ahead of expectations or a change in underlying factors. Unforeseen expenditure often results from the pull forward of funding from future years. In these instances it simply reflects changes in timing.

One example of a pull forward of funding in my area is the Linkfield Road overpass duplication. We all remember that Prime Minister Morrison and the local members for Petrie and Dickson stood on this site in 2018 and promised \$100 million for this project. Then six months later, at the 2019 federal budget, there was no money in their forward estimates for this project. We would have to wait until 2026 for the funding to start arriving. In late 2019 we campaigned successfully to get the federal government to bring forward their funding so that construction could start earlier, in 2023, which they reluctantly agreed to. Now we have the federal LNP members out there campaigning against their own agreed time lines which we got them to bring forward. The gall of this federal government is never ending and the community is sick of it. This is a perfect example of funding profile changes that get reflected in the process of this bill every year. I know the Prime Minister has seen the light this week to the detriment of his retinas. I only wish he saw the light on Linkfield Road way back in 2019.

I thank the committee and the chair of the committee for their consideration of these bills. I commend the bills to the House.