




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

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ADJOURNMENT

Morrison Federal Government

 **Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (6.08 pm): The federal budget released this week is a poor budget for Queensland. They have performed the old trick of promising billions and then pushing it out beyond the forward estimates so that it no longer exists. It is also remarkable that the time between the Prime Minister promising money and the time of the money evaporating is getting shorter and shorter. It used to last six months or so, like when they promised funding for Linkfield Road in 2018 but it got barely a mention in the 2019 budget. Now the monetary announcements barely last a week. As today's *Courier-Mail* reported, \$3.3 billion was promised for road and rail for Queensland, yet the budget papers contain only \$450 million. For water projects, of the \$6.9 billion promised nationally only \$1 billion over four years is actually in the budget, with no detail on the \$5.4 billion for Hells Gates Dam announced just last week.

On veterans matters, it was remarkable to see on the weekend the federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs threaten to quit over the Morrison government's lack of funding support for veterans. I read from an article titled 'Veterans' Affairs Minister Andrew Gee threatens to resign on eve of budget over funding shortfall'. I have a lot of respect for Minister Gee in his initial stand here, and in my dealings with him I have found him to be someone who seems genuine in his care for veterans. There is no doubt that the backlog of 60,000 unprocessed claims causes issues daily in the veterans community. The minister himself described the backlog as a national disgrace. For him to have to threaten to quit on the eve of an election budget in order to get veterans matters taken seriously by the Morrison government is also a disgrace.

Scott Morrison should hang his head in shame that, amongst a trillion dollars of debt and cash splashes galore, he cannot find \$96 million to clear a backlog of veterans' claims. In fact, he found only \$22.8 million over two years and an additional 90 staff as opposed to the 145 staff which were asked for. When I talk to veterans groups, it is one of the biggest issues they bring up: they are in limbo while they are waiting for their claims to be processed. It is very disappointing that even on the eve of an election the Prime Minister could not find the money to fix this issue. The \$22 million that has been committed in the budget looks more like a short-term political fix for the Prime Minister designed to get the LNP through to the election.

Onto state issues briefly, it was great to hear this morning the Premier announce \$1.5 million is available in the next round of two grants programs supporting veterans and their families—through the Anzac Day Trust Grants Program and the second round of the Anzac Day Trust COVID-19 Grants Program. I was especially pleased to hear the Premier announce that more than \$1.5 million has been awarded from the first round of another program, Queensland Remembers. There are some very worthy recipients. I think the member for Nanango has a couple. There are recipients from Allora to Blackbutt, from Ipswich to Longreach and right across the state. The program is fantastic and I am really looking forward to seeing it roll out.