



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

Record of Proceedings, 23 June 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (9.00 pm): This budget is the latest in a long line of good Labor budgets that fails the Sunshine Coast, the latest in a long line of budgets built on a foundation of broken promises, deception and new taxes. This is a budget that fails to deliver rail for Beerwah to Maroochydore, a budget that fails to deliver more police for residents of Sippy Downs and Mountain Creek who live with the constant scourge of young criminals stealing their cars and breaking into their homes. This is a budget that fails to deliver for the motorists who sit in traffic every day on the Mooloolah River interchange. It is a budget that fails to deliver for the 40 per cent of patients languishing on a ramp at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital because of chronic issues with the ER and ambulance ramping.

This is a budget that fails to deliver more teachers for schools like Mountain Creek State High School and Chancellor State College which are bursting at the seams and barely keeping up. It is a budget that ignores the Sunshine Coast and this budget is just the latest proof that Labor does not listen and that Labor does not care about the Sunshine Coast. It does not care about the 360,000 people who call the Sunshine Coast home, and they deserve better.

The Sunshine Coast is one of the fastest growing parts of Queensland. Places like Caloundra South and Palmview are growing at a phenomenal rate as new arrivals from places like Sydney and Melbourne flock here for our amazing lifestyle and tight-knit community. However, critical infrastructure like roads and rail is not keeping up with this growth. There has been a complete failure to plan for the population growth we are experiencing and, sadly, based on what we see in this budget it appears that this state government has given up even trying.

In years past I have been complimentary of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads because in the past he has been willing to work with me for the betterment of my community. In years gone past the minister listened and he promised to deliver essential upgrades for critical bottlenecks such as the Mooloolaba Road-Sugar Road intersection, but not this year. This year funding for every major road project in my electorate has been cut in half. Projects have been put on the go-slow or they have been cut.

If we use the Sugar Road-Mooloolaba Road intersection as an example, this time last year the minister said that in the 2022-23 year we would have \$6.3 million spent on actually upgrading this dangerous and congested bottleneck. After years of planning, works were supposed to start this month. However, what we have seen in this budget is a cut—a cut in half to \$3.5 million. When will works start? Thousands of motorists are stuck in congestion at this heavily used intersection every single day. I have

been fighting for this important upgrade since before I was elected in 2017. I was promised, as were the Sunshine Coast residents, that shovels would be in the ground on this project by now, but construction workers are nowhere to be seen and cars remain in daily traffic jams.

Just like the Sugar Road-Mooloolaba Road intersection, the Mooloolah River interchange has also had its funding cut in half this financial year. Minister Bailey has told local media that it has been delayed due to 'weather, COVID and flu outbreaks'. That has to be the worst excuse I have heard since 'the dog ate my homework'. How can the weather, COVID and flu impact a project that has not even started?

While I am on the subject of roads, where is the Bruce Highway connection road at Palmview? More than 5,000 residents in one of the nation's fastest growing areas are still waiting. The state government directed that this road would be built and opened by the end of this month. That still has not happened and it is clearly not going to happen. More than 5,000 of my constituents are still stuck using one road in and one out. I was hopeful that the roads minister would intervene, that we would see funding in this year's budget, but there is not a cent. It is simply not good enough.

I expect the minister to ensure the Bruce Highway connection road gets built sooner rather than later. The only thing stopping it is bureaucratic incompetence from both the state government and the Sunshine Coast Council. It is time for the minister to do his job and to deliver the road that Palmview locals have been promised. It is just another example of how this Labor state government has forgotten about the Sunshine Coast.

There are no roads and no rail for the Sunshine Coast. It beggars belief that this Labor state government did not take up the fifty-fifty funding to build heavy rail from Beerwah to Maroochydore. An amount of \$1.67 billion was allocated by the LNP federal government and it is being honoured by the newly elected Labor federal government, but did this Labor state government see fit to work collaboratively to deliver passenger rail from Beerwah to Maroochydore? No! Who knows if we will ever see that money offered again. It is almost laughable that what this transport minister did commit to was another business case. What a waste of taxpayers' money. It is nothing more than a pathetic attempt to stall.

The case to build heavy rail on the Sunshine Coast is clear. It has been investigated and it has proven worthy. It is a much needed piece of infrastructure, especially ahead of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Every man and his dog can see the need except this state government. In fact, when she was the transport minister the Premier committed to having this built by 2020 and we are two years past that date.

I am proud to be a member of a party that will build heavy rail on the Sunshine Coast. Only an LNP state government will provide a better future for the Sunshine Coast with this region-shaping project. It is what I and my Sunshine Coast LNP colleagues have been fighting for. In 2024 Sunshine Coast residents will have a choice: a future under this tired, corrupt state government who ignore the Sunshine Coast, or a future where a Crisafulli LNP state government listens and delivers game-changing projects like heavy passenger rail for all Sunshine Coast residents.

Just like roads and rail, the provision of state government services is falling behind in the Buderim electorate and right across the Sunshine Coast as our population swells. Every week I speak to locals who are justifiably concerned about crime in the area, especially the rise of youth crime, which is rampant across the state. They are concerned about a lack of police presence and whether help will arrive when they call. I am in regular contact with the officer in charge of Sippy Downs Police Station and I know that he and his staff are working hard to prevent crime and to respond to incidents. However, the simple fact is that our police can only do so much with the resources they have. We need more police on the front line keeping families and their belongings safe. The community is sick and tired of cars being stolen and houses being broken into. Police are sick and tired of arresting the same young offenders. My constituents and all Queenslanders deserve to feel safe, and I call on the government to make the provision of more police on the Sunshine Coast a priority.

I turn now to health. The Sunshine Coast holds the unwanted title of the worst performing health service for elective surgery wait times in all of Queensland. Almost half of all elective surgery patients at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital are not being treated within the clinically recommended time frame. The latest stats show that over 3,600 people are waiting for their surgery. Hundreds of patients, many in my electorate, are waiting in pain far longer than they should for the treatment that they deserve. The specialist outpatient waitlist, or the waitlist for the waitlist, is not much better.

Last week I met with a Palmview grandfather who is housebound due to his deteriorating eyesight. He has cataracts and despite being a category 2 patient, the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service have told him he will not be getting a specialist appointment until August next year. He should get one within 90 days. He tells me he sits and he cries and he does not know how he will go

on. What has Queensland Health come to when a treatment administered for not-for-profit organisations like the Fred Hollows Foundation in Third World countries cannot be accessed in a timely manner at our state-of-the-art hospitals?

I feel for people like Darrell and the hundreds of others just like him on the Sunshine Coast. Whenever someone like Darrell asks for help, I fight my hardest to get them the treatment they deserve, but they should not have to come to their local member just to get the health care they should have available to them. Every Queenslanders should have access to health care without having to wait months or even years longer than they should.

Despite the government's rhetoric in this budget, there is no significant funding to address the long waitlist at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital, a facility which is only five years old and is one of the worst performing in the state. There is nothing in this budget to fix the issue of ambulance ramping, which sits at 40 per cent. Almost one in two patients who arrive in an ambulance at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital ED are left in the care of paramedics for more than 30 minutes. Frequently, patients wait for hours. It is not what our hardworking paramedics signed up for. They want to be back on the road helping the next person in need. This ramping crisis means that an ambulance might not arrive in time to help a Mountain Creek grandmother who has had a fall, a Buderim boy having an asthma attack or a Sippy Downs mum in labour. Queenslanders expect better from their health system. My LNP colleagues and I have been proposing real solutions for many months now. More beds, better triaging, the release of real-time data and putting doctors and nurses back in charge of hospitals will go a long way to fixing the Queensland health crisis.

The last two years have been marked by considerable hardship for small and family business. In fact, this time last year much of Queensland was just seven days away from another COVID lockdown. At that time, industry stakeholders and the LNP had to fight to get support for business, and the government's failure to anticipate the needs of small and family business was all the evidence Queenslanders need to know that this Labor state government either do not understand or do not care about small and family business. With this budget the state government show that they still do not understand the needs of small and family business. Despite assertions to the opposite in the budget papers and in the brief contributions from the minister and her Labor colleagues, this budget sees a cut in the support for small and family business, with a paltry \$1 million allocated to support small and family business and to support the Mentoring for Growth program in the next financial year. How is that a genuine commitment to small business?

On training and skills, this budget writes large the fact that this Labor state government is failing. By the government's own estimation, this budget shows it has failed to meet all but one measure of effectiveness. Once again, the state government has failed to reach its apprenticeship targets. Apprenticeship completions in 2021-22 fell short by over 1,200. Over the last seven years this state government has fallen short by 14,400 apprenticeship completions. Imagine what another 14,000 apprentices would mean for Queensland at this time.

With completed apprenticeships below target and with no economic modelling on the economic impact of having fewer qualified tradespersons, Queensland is experiencing a skilled and unskilled labour shortage leaving the entire state with too many job vacancies. In fact, for many of the industries that the state government like to trumpet, employment numbers are down. In manufacturing, in agriculture and tourism, jobs are down. If I focus just on the Wide Bay, for example, the number of people employed as metal fitters and machinists is down from 2,207 in 2015 to 896 last month. That is a reduction of nearly 60 per cent over this term of government. Remember that Wide Bay is where this state government like to crow about building more trains, and presumably metalworkers are an important part of that.

Those opposite might think I am being selective about the data here, but I am not. Most regions have seen a reduction in the type of jobs that this government would say they want to create more of. Jobs in manufacturing, agriculture, education and tourism are all down. Perhaps more worrying is the fact that the policies of this state government are not producing the skilled workforce that employers need in order to grow. That is why we are seeing a reduction in jobs in many key areas. Employers simply cannot get the workforce they need so they are required to automate, move or reduce production just to remain sustainable.

The state government like to crow about training commencements, but they are silent on training completions. That is the key part. The SDS is deliberately framed to focus on competency completions, not qualifications completions, but the reality is that many jobs require a full qualification to be completed in order to make someone employable. While it is great that the unemployment rate is low, I believe that we are moving into a period when workforce availability is going to become more of an issue than unemployment. In such an environment Queensland businesses need more than ever government policy that is focused on delivering the skilled workers they need. Pouring funding into a training system

that does not align with the current and future needs of employment is about as useful as rearranging the deck chairs on the *Titanic*. That is why it is somewhat alarming that the government is only now committing to develop a Queensland workforce strategy. Only now in this budget has the government thought about a workforce strategy, but I guess it is a start and I look forward to holding the government to account as it delivers it.

I also acknowledge the commitment in this budget for a number of schools and school projects in my electorate. We have upgrades to the special school and the primary school at Palmview. More particularly, I would like to speak to the new halls at Chancellor and Buderim Mountain state schools. Both of these have been desperately needed as they are at some of the biggest schools in the state. Chancellor has 3½ thousand students. I appreciate the government's commitment to get these halls built. More particularly, I would like to acknowledge the P&Cs, which are contributing a considerable amount of their own funding so that these halls can be built—over \$500,000 for both of those schools. On behalf of the community I would like to acknowledge the government's contribution but also the contribution from the P&Cs.

I will finish as I started. This is a budget built on a foundation of deception. There is an old saying: tell a mistruth once and all your truths become questionable. How can Queenslanders ever trust anything that this slippery Treasurer says, when 26 times he reassured them that there would be no new or increased taxes? We see three new or increased taxes in this budget alone. Queenslanders deserve better.