



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 3)

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BETTING TAX AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (3.43 pm): We are often talking about budget blowouts in this place and here it is written in black and white in the appropriation bills. The state government have lost control of the budget and we see the evidence here today with the Treasurer asking the parliament to authorise an extra \$2.8 billion on top of the budget that was previously approved by the parliament.

Ms Boyd: It's a normal part of the process.

Mr MICKELBERG: I hear those opposite saying this is a normal part of the process, and I think I heard earlier that this is business as usual. This is a record overspend since the Bligh government, a government which was dysfunctional and was rightly and soundly voted out by the people of Queensland long before I came to this place. The overspend is \$2.825 billion, which is the largest overspend in 10 years. I do not know how many Queensland households or businesses would tolerate a \$565 budget blowout for each and every person in their business or household. That is what this equates to: an extra \$565 for every single Queenslander. I can tell honourable members right now that they would not tolerate it. When I worked at ANZ and the NAB I would have been sacked if I blew my budget in the same way the Treasurer has. I would have been sacked and I would deserve to have been sacked, just as this Treasurer deserves to be sacked.

Government members interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: They do not like it, but the truth is they cannot control the budget, they cannot manage the budget and it is Queenslanders who are suffering.

The Treasurer comes in here and tries to pretend that this blowout is simply because of unforeseen circumstances like COVID and floods. I say that \$138 million of the budget blowouts that we are debating today are due to the failures of Minister Farmer. The budget blowout in the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training is primarily due to funding for business support grants. Never mind that the budget that we are debating contained no provision for grants to support small businesses in the middle of the COVID pandemic; never mind that 335,000 Queensland small and family businesses were in lockdown on the first day the budget that we are now debating came into effect. Two-thirds of Queensland businesses were in lockdown on the first day that this budget came into effect and this state Labor government did not have the foresight to provision for business support grants. That is why we are here. It was only after advocacy from the CCIQ, the opposition and others that the state government were dragged kicking and screaming to provide the support that small and family businesses needed in their hour of need.

That is why we are here with this state government asking for another \$2.825 billion, because they cannot plan. They cannot plan, they cannot execute, they do not listen and they do not anticipate the needs of the very Queenslanders they purport to represent. Time and again the state government are left to react. They react in a shoddy and haphazard manner and it is Queenslanders who suffer. They cannot plan and they need to react.

What happens as a consequence when they fail to plan? What happens when the state government fail to plan? We end up in situations where Minister Farmer presides over \$4 million of potential fraud. There is \$4 million of potential fraud that is simply ignored by this state government because they cannot plan and they cannot deliver. That is \$4 million of potentially fraudulent business support grants that could have been paid to those small and family businesses who needed it most in their hour of need. Rather than fix the problem, rather than plan, rather than anticipate the needs that might occur, the state government choose to ignore problems like \$4 million of fraud of Queenslanders' money.

Every single ministerial portfolio the member for Bulimba touches ends up a basket case. That is why we are here debating supplementary appropriations, because the ministers on that side of the House are incapable of governing. Who can forget the kids in detention fiasco and that train wreck of an interview that the member for Bulimba delivered when she was the youth justice minister? Now she is the Minister for Small Business and Training and she has presided over failure after failure—failure of the business support grants and the business basics grants. She managed to muck it up twice in a month and it is Queenslanders who pay for those failures.

Some of the other brilliant ideas rolled out by Minister Farmer include spending \$2 million on two tradies under the Tradies in Paradise scheme. I think we can safely say that the Tradies in Paradise scheme was a failure. The minister said it would attract a thousand qualified tradies to help with flood recovery, but they got two—not a thousand but two. That was \$2 million wasted on a PR ad campaign which could have been used to help several small businesses through flood recovery or to even rebuild a few of the damaged homes.

Under Minister Farmer, Queensland has 14,400 fewer apprentices than should have been delivered. That is 14,400 fewer apprentices in the middle of a skills crisis. They talk about their plans—about their employment plans and their workforce plans—but they do not deliver. This Palaszczuk Labor government have failed to meet their own objective by more than 14,000, never mind the \$4 million worth of fraud that the minister is ignoring. Queenslanders deserve better than ministers like Minister Farmer who cannot govern and cannot serve the people of Queensland.

Infrastructure is another area that has been a victim of the failures of ministerial accountability. We have come to know them as 'Bailey's budget blowouts'. In my electorate of Buderim alone we have had multiple critical projects delayed. I speak of projects like the Sugar Road-Mooloolah Road intersection upgrade and the Mooloolah River interchange. They are just two of the many that come to mind. The state government committed in early 2019 to upgrade the Sugar Road-Mooloolaba Road intersection and work was meant to commence in mid-2022, four or five months ago. However, we still have not even seen a shovel in the ground and this year's budget saw funding for this critical project cut almost in half.

Why did funding need to be cut in half? It is because this government cannot manage the budget. They have consistent overruns on key projects like Cross River Rail—right across the board. That is why we are here debating an extra \$2.8 billion. That is why key projects like the Sugar Road and Mooloolaba Road intersection have been cut. Funding has been cut for the Mooloolah River interchange—all because this state government cannot manage a budget. Never mind that the federal government is providing 50 per cent of the funding for a state road that this government should be funding entirely. They cannot plan, they cannot manage a budget and they do not care.

The Treasurer, with his dismissive answers and theatrical performances, shows that he is just auditioning for the top job—never mind that he has no hope of getting the top job. He likes to audition for the top job when he should be focused on doing his job. Queenslanders deserve a Treasurer who cares about the budget and cares about them. Right now, they have a Treasurer who is more interested in getting the top job.

The opposition will not oppose the appropriation bills because, let's be honest, this money has already been spent and all of this is window-dressing. All of this is to make us all feel good. These bills have simply highlighted the wasteful spending of this government, which is overseen by a Treasurer who is out of his depth. Now is probably a good time to remind everyone that the Treasurer promised 26 times that there would be no new or increased taxes—never mind we are considering three new or increased taxes as a part of this debate. For me, that is a pretty good reason Queenslanders cannot trust this government.

I note that this bill amends the Payroll Tax Act, which was rushed through the parliament during budget week, with only three days between the introduction and the consideration in detail. This type of behaviour is becoming more and more consistent in this third-term government. As Albo said, governments do not get better in their fourth term. If the performance of this tired, third-term Labor state government is any evidence, Queenslanders definitely cannot afford another term of a government more focused on themselves than on the people of Queensland.

Do members know what is not contained in this bill? There is no funding for Sunshine Coast heavy rail between Beerwah and Maroochydore through the CAMCOS corridor. Federal Labor have said that they will maintain the funding allocated by the former LNP federal government to build the project. The only thing standing in the way is this state Labor government. They will not come to the party and they will not fund their 50 per cent share.

The Minister for Transport and Main Roads likes to carry on blaming others and suggesting that the federal LNP budget was not real, despite the fact that his federal colleague Catherine King relies on the same document as her evidence for Labor's commitment to the project. As the tireless Sunshine Coast rail advocate Jeff Addison brought to my attention on the weekend, the truth is that the state Labor Party actually committed funding to build heavy rail to Maroochydore all the way back in 2006, when the member for Sandgate entered the parliament. In that year's state budget, funding was allocated 'as a part of \$2.6 billion committed under SEQIPP to construct the Caboolture to Maroochydore corridor study between the north coast line at Beerwah and the high-growth area of the Sunshine Coast'. I ask: what work was done? Where is the heavy rail that was promised in 2006—16 years ago? We have nothing. The Sunshine Coast is still waiting for rail which was promised in 2006. Labor does not care about the Sunshine Coast, and Sunshine Coast residents know it.