




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR JORDAN

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2)

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 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (3.45 pm): I rise to support the appropriation bills before us. As members should be aware, this is an annual process which reconciles departmental appropriations at the end of each financial year against the relevant budget projections, in this instance for the 2020-21 financial year. I feel I have to say this because it would seem from listening to those across the chamber that some people think this is some kind of Labor conspiracy when, in fact, it is an annual process under the Financial Accountability Act 2009. Six departments saw unforeseen expenditure representing 0.74 per cent of the 2020-21 budgeted allocations, well below the average of the past decade and below the LNP peak of unforeseen expenditure of 0.94 per cent. That was under an LNP treasurer.

Our economy in Queensland is going from strength to strength, and isn't that driving some of those opposite completely mad? They are so mad that they are looking for any opportunity or excuse to talk down the Queensland economy. Why do they hate Queensland? Why? They cannot deny the facts. Our economic growth in 2021 was faster than the national average, growing by 6.1 per cent compared to Australia's economy, which grew by 3.9 per cent. By working hard to limit the spread of COVID-19 and our world-leading health response, we have delivered a strong economic position the envy of other states and nations, remembering that amidst the most challenging of economic conditions in a global pandemic all indications are that our state government's economic plan is working.

We saw evidence of this only last week when the latest ABS labour force figures were released showing Queensland's unemployment rate is 4.4 per cent, the lowest level since December 2008. I tried to recall what I was doing in December 2008. It turns out that I was actually pregnant with my second child, and that baby started high school this year. That is how long ago it was.

Queensland has added more jobs than any other state or territory since March 2020, with 124,300 more Queenslanders in jobs today than there were pre COVID. Through initiatives such as our \$3.34 billion Queensland Jobs Fund, our government is supporting the growth of industries, enabling Queensland businesses to make more and add value across the state's regions. Our government's economic recovery plan is helping manufacturers to develop advanced capabilities and support sustainability backed by reliable, renewable, competitively priced energy.

A fantastic example of this is my own electorate where Australian energy technology company Lavo hydrogen is establishing a \$15 million facility backed by the Palaszczuk government through our Invested in Queensland fund. Construction of the new facility is due to get underway shortly and the jobs to come from this are significant. Up to 200 construction jobs will be created over the next 12 months. Once fuel cell production ramps up, there will be almost 170 operational jobs supported here by 2026. Lavo's hydrogen technology has generated considerable customer interest here in Australia and overseas, and this new facility will allow the company to export Queensland-made

products to the world. This is one of a number of significant projects being supported by our government through the Invested in Queensland program including the construction and ownership of a new processing plant for vanadium in Townsville, a key new resource mineral used for the construction of large-scale grid batteries that store their charge in tanks of liquid.

Australia has the world's third largest deposits of vanadium resources, but right now we do not produce a single kilogram of processed vanadium. The mining companies looking to process this mineral on an industrial scale do not have the capital necessary to make that jump. This is where the Palaszczuk government is stepping in to invest and support a key new industry. This is what political and economic leadership looks like.

We know that workforce shortages are impacting our state. This is why our continued investment in skills and training, such as Skilling Queenslanders for Work, continues to support Queenslanders to upskill and prepare them for the jobs of the future. Last week I spent some time at the highly successful WestTEC Trade Training Centre in Springfield. I am completely blown away by the success of this facility. There are now six schools working together to further the skills of their students. Some of these students are disengaged with general school learning and are finding their passion through a trade. They are doing this with TAFE Queensland and a range of fantastic industry partners, including Mater Education and Cummins. I am so proud that our government made a strong election commitment to expand the WestTEC Trade Training Centre, investing more than \$2.25 million. I look forward to sharing the plans with our community in the near future.

Another key area where we are seeing incredible growth is in housing. Dwellings commencements are 40 per cent higher than they were before COVID and higher than the national increase. We are certainly seeing growth in electorates like mine. I regularly meet with local development companies. They have indicated that demand has never been stronger, even with the HomeBuilder scheme ending. Much of this demand has been led by the increase in interstate migration. More than 31,000 people moved to Queensland in 2020. I sometimes feel like they are all coming to Ipswich and Logan, but I know that many members are sharing the load across our state. Why are they here? It is because Queensland is seen as a safe place to live and work. As a government, we are cognisant of what this means for housing demand and affordability in Queensland. It is clearly something the member for Toowoomba North missed in his address. Our government's record \$2.9 billion investment in social and affordable housing is the largest concentrated investment in Queensland's history. This includes our \$1.9 billion investment over four years, including 7,400 new builds through programs such as QuickStarts and the Help to Home initiative, which will produce 1,000 private housing outcomes through the private market in areas of high demand.

We are also doing things differently when it comes to social and affordable housing with our \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund. We are calling on developers, institutional investors, registered housing providers and eligible government entities to bring forward innovative proposals to add new social homes and additional affordable housing builds. The Queensland Treasurer has requested that I, as the Assistant Minister for Treasury, work closely with our team in Treasury on how we can pursue all opportunities to increase social and affordable housing in Queensland through this investment fund, particularly in addressing homelessness, diverse rental supply, housing choices for seniors and homes for large households.

Of course, we are doing this with the spectre of a decision by Scott Morrison and the LNP to walk away from the National Rental Affordability Scheme. This will leave more than 10,000 Queensland tenants paying more rent or having to find more affordable housing. As we give, the federal government takes away. By mid-2025 there will be no affordable housing under the NRAS program. This is absolutely deplorable. We do not hear anything from those opposite about this dreadful decision. Perhaps the member for Toowoomba North's concerns about affordability could begin being addressed by him speaking with his own federal LNP colleagues.

I am pleased, however, that federal Labor has announced a strong and solid plan for social and affordable housing in this country. An Albanese Labor government will create \$10 billion off-budget Housing Australia Future Fund. In a similar fashion to our Housing Investment Fund, over the first five years the investment returns will build around 20,000 social housing properties, with 4,000 of these allocated for women and children fleeing domestic and family violence and older women on low incomes, who we know are at risk of homelessness. There will be 10,000 affordable housing properties for frontline workers. Every person deserves to have a roof over their head. I am very happy that federal Labor has already committed to working with states on addressing this significant issue for our communities.

Our government's response to the pandemic, the resulting strength of Queensland's economic performance and our willingness to invest heavily—whether in new industries or important social infrastructure—means we are well positioned for the next phase of Queensland's economic future. I congratulate the Queensland Treasurer on the work he has done on the appropriation bills. I commend these bills to the House.