



Speech By  
**Charis Mullen**

**MEMBER FOR JORDAN**


---

Record of Proceedings, 9 November 2022

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 3)**

**APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 3)**

**BETTING TAX AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (4.48 pm): I rise to support both the appropriation bills and the Betting Tax and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. As members are well aware, the appropriation bills represent an annual process which reconciles departmental appropriations at the end of each financial year against the relevant budget projections—in this instance for the 2021-22 financial year. Once again, the disingenuous way that those opposite seem to frame this debate needs to be called out. This is an annual process under the Financial Accountability Act 2009. We also have an annual process from the opposition of mock outrage and the faux clutching of pearls in dealing with these bills. The Oscar in this debate would usually go to the member for Mermaid Beach. He always shares some weird mistruths or odd conspiracies with us all. To be fair, he still did that—just not with any real gusto. It was very disappointing, I have to say.

The Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2022 proposes to authorise the Treasurer's payment for unforeseen expenditure incurred by 14 departments in the 2021-22 financial year as set out in schedule 1 of the bill. The 2021-22 financial year was a year heavily impacted by the ongoing effects of COVID-19 and a significant weather event in the early part of 2022. I want to acknowledge the member for Mount Ommaney whose electorate was heavily impacted by those floods.

During this time, our government provided additional funding to support local businesses and tourism operators through our COVID-19 Business Support Grants and other funding—which, as Treasury advised the parliamentary committee, was a significant amount of spending not anticipated at the time of the budget. In a time of great uncertainty and necessary lockdowns, I certainly know that small businesses in our electorates on this side of the House very much appreciated those business support grants, though it would seem that those opposite believe these grants were a waste of money—that funding for small business was a waste of money. This is a message I will certainly be sharing with businesses in my electorate.

It is also worth noting, and as the Treasurer advised in the last sitting, the final position for the 2021-22 financial year is a surplus of \$4.3 billion—the largest recorded surplus since records began. For all the opposition's misleading comments about financial mismanagement, once again, the facts speak for themselves. As the Treasurer also outlined, our government does not deliver surpluses for their own sake. The 2021-22 surplus is being put to work delivering infrastructure, services and jobs for the people of Queensland.

The opposition in their statement of reservation reference wasteful spending and claim that our government does not value Queenslanders' money the way it should. My question to those opposite is: what will they be cutting? All evidence indicates that this is the road that we are heading down under the Leader of the Opposition—cutting, sacking and selling.

Will they cut our defining Health and Hospitals Plan, which included a record \$23.6 billion health budget, \$9.78 billion in additional funding for the Capacity Expansion Program, three new hospitals, a new Queensland Cancer Centre and 11 hospital expansion projects? Will they cut the new Toowoomba Hospital? As the shadow Treasurer told us, he is very keen on using Ctrl-F. I can tell you that the people of Toowoomba will be Ctrl-F'd if he ends up as our state's Treasurer!

Will they cut our Better Care Together plan—\$1.64 billion in additional funding over five years for mental health, alcohol and other drug services? Will they cut or indeed say anything about our world-class Energy and Jobs Plan—\$6 billion investment in our energy future, a future of clean, reliable and affordable energy, a plan that will power good jobs and new industries across our vast state but particularly benefiting regional areas?

Will they cut the additional \$1 billion we have announced to support our Housing Investment Fund or the \$363 million to respond to the first report of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce? What will they cut? What they consider to be 'wasteful spending' is important funding that is addressing the significant issues that matter to the people that we represent.

Locally, in the Jordan electorate, my constituents see the important investments that we are making, particularly in infrastructure—our \$44.5 million Springfield Central park-and-ride completed this financial year, as well as the new Brighton Homes Arena, the home of the Brisbane Lions, for which our government contributed \$18 million. Construction is currently underway on the Centenary Highway-Logan Motorway interchange upgrade, as well as our brand new school in Augustine Heights, Woogaroo Creek State School, and Flagstone State School's new learning centre—both to open early in 2023.

Early works are beginning on the new Mater Public Hospital and the new Greater Springfield Fire and Rescue station, as well as construction beginning shortly on the WesTec Trade Training Centre expansion. There is also additional funding for the Centenary Highway and catalyst funding for extensions to New Beith Road and Teviot Road in Flagstone and Greenbank. These projects are important for the people I represent—and I am very proud that I have been able to deliver them with the support of our Premier, Treasurer and the Palaszczuk government.

I now turn to the Betting Tax and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. We know that its primary objective is to provide a more sustainable funding model for Queensland's racing industry. That will be done by introducing a five per cent racing levy in addition to the 15 per cent betting tax rate, incorporating free bets into the calculation of betting tax and providing for the hypothecation of 80 per cent of annual betting tax revenue to the Racing Queensland Board.

The bill also proposes changes intended to ensure that country thoroughbred race meetings in Queensland receive a minimum amount of the betting tax revenue paid to Racing Queensland and this has had strong support from the racing industry. In fact, Racing Queensland expressed strong support for the funding model proposed in the bill, noting that the proposed changes will, in their words, 'enable the racing industry in Queensland to benefit directly from what it creates'. They also indicated that certainty of funding is critically important for their industry to thrive and is the basis upon which they can create long-term strategies which will grow the industry.

The bill also proposes changes to the Payroll Tax Act which are designed to better align the mechanisms relating to the mental health levy with those relating to payroll tax. These changes were foreshadowed by the Treasurer at the time the original legislation was passed and ensure issues identified by the Queensland Revenue Office as they prepare for the implementation of the levy are properly addressed.

As members are aware, from 1 January 2023, a mental health levy will apply to large employers, or groups of employers, in Queensland that pay Australia-wide wages in excess of \$10 million annually. The mental health levy will be imposed at 0.25 per cent on Australia-wide wages more than \$10 million, plus an additional 0.5 per cent on Australia-wide wages over \$100 million.

Our record health budget committed an additional \$1.6 billion for mental health services over the next five years, together with \$28.5 million in capital funding. I am really proud of our government's commitment to addressing the mental health crisis that we know is in all of our communities. This is the biggest ever investment in mental health services in Queensland.

I want to congratulate the health minister on the release of Better Care Together—a five-year plan that will continue the momentum we have seen to improve the mental health and wellbeing outcomes for Queenslanders by transforming, optimising and growing state funded mental health, alcohol and other drug treatment, care and support and responses to the mental health crisis and suicide. It also recognises the importance of balancing the provision of this treatment, care and support across community and hospital-based services, addressing that 'missing middle' that I have previously referenced in this parliament, and delivering an optimal mix of services and the right treatment and beds for the right purpose at the right time.

Our government's response to the pandemic, the resulting strength of Queensland's economic performance and our willingness to invest heavily—whether in critical infrastructure or key services—means we are well positioned for the next phase of Queensland's economic future. I commend the work of the Queensland Treasury and the Treasurer in both the appropriation bills and the Betting Tax and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I commend these bills to the House.