



Speech By
Deb Frecklington


MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 23 June 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (3.18 pm): As many on this side have said—and I note the shadow Treasurer is here in the chamber—this is quite simply a budget of broken promises. There was a promise of no new taxes. Those opposite have broken the debt promise, they have broken the service promise, they have broken the spending promise and they have failed on integrity and transparency.

They have truly broken the trust of Queenslanders. Let us start with the promise that there would be no new taxes. The Treasurer promised 26 times, at a minimum, that there would be no increased or new taxes. Instead, we have a payroll tax increase, a racing levy and a coal royalty increase. Incredibly, the Treasurer has tried to weasel his way out of it by saying that he did not make a promise to business; the promise was only to the people of Queensland. I think that the Treasurer may need a lesson in reality. I say to the Treasurer that a large percentage of ‘the people of Queensland’ actually are in business. They are businesspeople. They are business owners. You cannot separate them from ‘the people of Queensland’. They have personal lives. They have families. They have children. They are a part of our communities. They are Queenslanders. That excuse is completely ridiculous.

I turn to integrity and transparency or, should I say, the complete lack of. Currently in Queensland we have 10 major commissions of inquiry or reviews into serious integrity issues. Today, CFMMEU union boss Michael Ravbar came out and savaged the Premier for failing to exorcise the creeping cancer of lobbyists from her government. That was quite an extraordinary step.

Of course, then there is the debt, which continues to grow relentlessly. It is now \$110 billion and will be \$129 billion by the end of the forwards. This is an increase of 80 per cent. Additionally, after a fake privatisation of the titles registry last year, specifically to lower net debt, net debt is set to triple in the forwards. That will set alarm bells ringing for the ratings services. However, this government does not seem to care about that. They always forget about the people of Queensland. We know that reckless borrowing over the years is finally taking its toll. The government’s chickens will come home to roost.

In relation to the Nanango electorate, I will start with the huge cost-of-living pressures. Currently in Queensland inflation is at six per cent, which is the highest rate in the nation. The new federal Treasurer has confirmed that we are in the grips of a full-blown cost-of-living crisis. However, all the government has elected to do to support struggling Queenslanders is offer one electricity rebate. Beyond that half-hearted rebate, the government has announced no new initiatives to counter the skyrocketing cost of living. Clearly, this government’s priorities are all wrong.

There is also a housing crisis, which each and every member of this House will know about. It is having a heartbreaking effect on my community. When it comes to housing, there is nothing new in this budget. There is not another cent towards a new home to house a Queenslander in need. This is at a time when, in the Nanango electorate, families are living in their tents or in their cars. When it comes to housing, the government's record is abysmal. We know that this government is tired and they are out of ideas having been in government for seven years. In the past five years, the number of social housing bedrooms has increased by less than one per cent but the waiting list has grown by 70 per cent. They have built 1,190 bedrooms for 50,000 Queenslanders. That is a national disgrace.

Let us have a chat about road funding or, should I say, the absence or lack of road funding. The Nanango electorate covers a large area, including the South Burnett, Somerset, Cherbourg, western parts of the Gympie region and northern parts of the Toowoomba Regional Council. I have done some calculations on figures from the QTRIP program for 2022-23 to 2025-26. It is good that the minister is in the chamber to hear this, because these figures are quite frightening. For the entire South Burnett regional area, which covers 8,382 square kilometres, just 5.7 per cent of the Wide Bay/Burnett TMR roads budget has been assigned to that region's roads. For the Somerset region it is even worse with just 2.6 per cent of the North Coast region's TMR roads budget allocated to Somerset roads. Let us put that into perspective: the Somerset region covers half of the entire North Coast district, but it gets just 2.6 per cent of the funding.

In fact, the whole of the Nanango electorate has been completely overlooked and, once again, our regional communities will continue to have to put up with a third-class road system. This state budget continues the Labor way of chronic neglect of regional road upgrades and maintenance. It is an unacceptable amount given the continued deterioration of the major connecting roads throughout the region. There is no new funding for our major highways such as the Burnett, Wide Bay and Bunya highways or, of course, the very important D'Aguilar and Brisbane Valley highways.

I am bitterly disappointed that, once again, there is no funding to upgrade the seriously dangerous Tanduringie Creek Bridge. I have spoken about this in the House time and time again as it is where the local school bus, which was full of schoolkids, nearly collided with a truck a few years ago. Still an upgrade of that bridge has not been funded. I call on the minister to get it into the QTRIP or any form of funding. We need that to be done. On the Brooweena-Woolooga Road, Running Creek Bridge, which burnt down after a car crash, still has no funding prospects. Over the past year I have continued to advocate for funding for key roads and I will list them because the minister is here: Mundubbera-Durong Road, Kingaroy-Barkers Creek Road, Kilkivan-Tansey Road, the single-lane Cooyar Bridge on the New England Highway, Memerambi-Gordonbrook Road and Byee Road. But still there is nothing.

Tragically, more people are dying on Queensland roads than ever before and the state government has failed to meet their targets for road fatalities and hospitalisations. As of last Sunday, 138 people have died on our roads—

Mr Power interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Can you believe the opportune time that the member for Logan chooses to interject? We are talking about people's lives. It never ceases to amaze me. That figure is 12 more than in 2021 and 29 people above the five-year average. However, they continue to patch our roads, which are full of potholes. If the roads are sealed they are barely a single lane in width or they are corrugated gravel roads that are completely unsafe. What about the GS Bond Bridge on the Chinchilla-Wondai Road? That project was listed for an overhaul—and I have spoken about it in this House before—but it has dropped off the radar.

Labor really needs to start considering and spending money in regional areas if they expect Queensland to prosper. Most of the projects listed in the budget for the Nanango electorate—those that I can find—are simply reannouncements. I had hoped to see funding for several projects that I would like to highlight again. Of course, I will continue to talk about decent investment in all infrastructure and not just roads; but we also need investment in staffing and specialist health clinics.

There is no doubt that the Kingaroy Hospital is understaffed. Everyone knows that, ultimately, it is the staff who deliver our health services, but there are too many short-staffed shifts resulting in stressed and overworked nurses and doctors. I will continue to advocate for a full-time paediatrician, a specialist cancer care nurse, tele-stroke support and a persistent pain clinic for the South Burnett. For the members of my community who travel into the Gympie region, I support the push by the member for Gympie for upgrades to the hospital in Gympie. I understand why he slams this budget for not funding any improvements to the Gympie Hospital.

In relation to mental health, I welcome the government's commitment to tackling mental health issues in our state. For the past 10 years I have advocated for improved mental health funding across the state. It will never be enough—no matter what we do—but we must continue to advocate for more

and better funding, particularly in regional areas. Given that I represent an area that has the highest suicide rate in the state, I want to place on the record part of the LNP members' statement of reservation to the report of the Mental Health Select Committee, which was blunt. It states—

For the government to launch this Inquiry and turn the sensitive issue of mental illness into a trojan horse to raise revenue through a payroll tax is inexplicable.

The solution to tax Queenslanders in the middle of a cost of living crisis would exacerbate the very problem this Committee sought to solve.

We know that every community needs more mental health funding. There is no doubt. There are several other issues that have been overlooked. I talk again about the early warning system for the creeks around the Boobyjan area where, tragically, 14-year-old girl Krystal Cain lost her life. Tragically, she is still missing in the creek. We know that those communities living along the Boonara-Nangur creek system had no warning in relation to the rising floodwaters. Landholders in this area have suffered terribly including not just that loss of life but the loss of horses, cattle, sheep, equipment and crops. More needs to be done. That is why I continue to call for that early flood-warning system. It is vitally important for my community.

In the small amount of time I have left, I would like to talk about broken promises and what was missed in relation to my shadow portfolio. It is good to see the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water in the House. He must be so mortally embarrassed that his voice cannot be heard across the cabinet table. It is so embarrassing that they have spent a couple of question times trying to talk about manufacturing, because they know there is nothing new in the budget for manufacturing in Queensland. It was embarrassing to hear the minister talk about regional development. What could the minister talk about? Nothing. A bit of dingo fencing. Yes, we do need more of that. It is good to see that the member for Gregory is in the chamber. That was all the minister could rattle off for regional development.

I say to the Minister for Regional Development: maybe get out of Gladstone once in a while, get around the state and look at what this state needs. We need more support for housing and for nurses in regional Queensland. We need better roads. We need more services in regional Queensland. We need better education services so we can encourage young people to move out to the bush. That is what regional development is about. Yes, we need to support the sheep and goat industry, without a doubt, but there is more to regional Queensland than just that. There is water that will grow these regional communities.

The only thing that this minister and the member for Bundaberg delivered was the tearing down of a wall just so they could rebuild it. What sort of plan is that? Goodness me, Minister! Go into the cabinet room and show some muscle, seriously. Support regional Queensland. Put some projects on the table that will actually grow regional Queensland. If the minister cannot find anything to do in the regional development department of his portfolio, he should build some water projects and support some regional Queensland areas. He should talk to the main roads minister and tell him to do something about the \$6 million backlog of road maintenance in regional Queensland. Those are the sort of things that will support regional Queensland. That is what regional development is about: growing the regions, getting people to live out there and making housing available. That is what you need to do. I feel for this minister, who cannot show what he contributes at cabinet.

(Time expired)