



Speech By
Laura Gerber


MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Record of Proceedings, 24 June 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (3.00 pm): I want to acknowledge a massive win for us in this budget. For over 18 months I have been fighting alongside the SMA community to see spinal muscular atrophy added to the newborn heel prick test in Queensland. Last week the government committed to the funding and this week it is in the budget. This is a massive win for the 1,500 people who signed my petition last year. It is a massive win for the families affected by SMA who have been fighting for this change for years. In particular I want to thank Kate, Grant, Arabella and Oakley Gough; I want to thank Lucy, Dan, Winter and Eden Hyett; I want to thank Katie, Clay, Tully and Reena McIntosh and their support worker Sarah; and I want to thank Brianna and Harper Willmer. These families joined me in parliament yesterday. Instead of having to march on parliament, we had a celebratory morning tea on the Speaker's Green. These incredible families fought for this change, even though it would not help their children. No other Queensland family will suffer the devastating effects of untreated SMA thanks to their courage and bravery. I want to put on the record my desire to see the implementation fast-tracked. I note the health minister has advised that SMA testing will not form part of the screening program until May next year. In that time there will be approximately nine Queensland babies born with SMA. If this commitment is not fast-tracked those children will be diagnosed too late. I implore the minister to get this testing up and running sooner rather than later. It cannot wait a whole year.

Sadly, the funding for SMA is where the good news ends for us in this budget. In fact, the Currumbin electorate has received no new services or projects—that is right: zero! All the funding we received is money promised many budgets ago for projects that have been talked about for years. The Gold Coast Regional Action Plan highlights three continuations of budgetary funding for our community, all of which were 2020 election commitments. We have the Tugun Satellite Hospital, the Currumbin Eco-Parkland and the upgrade of the M1 from Varsity Lakes to Tugun.

Firstly turning to the Tugun Satellite Hospital, in the last budget it looked like we were not going to get the promised satellite hospital at Tugun so our community started a petition to force the government to keep its promise. We succeeded, only to learn that the satellite hospital is not, in fact, a real hospital. There is no emergency department, no overnight beds and no operating theatre. Now our community will have to fight for the satellite hospital to deliver the services that they actually need. Many people in my community use the ED just over the border at Tweed Heads. One in four people who attend the ED at the Tweed are Southern Gold Coasters.

Mr Bailey interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Member for Miller, order!

Mrs GERBER: That is 12,200 constituents of mine who will no longer have a hospital when the Tweed Hospital closes down and services move to the new Tweed Valley Hospital. Our Southern Gold Coast community will be left out in the cold. We will have to travel longer to get to an ED and either overload Robina Hospital or the Gold Coast University Hospital, particularly for constituents who have paediatric needs. Two days ago Gold Coast Health took the extraordinary step of taking to social media, telling residents not to visit their stressed ED unless they have a serious medical condition. This comes only 24 hours after the Treasurer handed down a 'record spend on health' budget. For the Tugun Satellite Hospital to actually help our community it must be a real hospital: it must have an ED, it must have overnight beds and it must have an operating theatre.

Next there is the promise of the Currumbin Eco-Parkland. This promise has been underfunded from the start. The budget has about \$13 million allocated this year; however, the land has been valued at \$70 million. Even using 'Labornomics' those figures do not add up. Had the government properly planned for this project, like good government should, it could have acquired this land and saved the taxpayer the \$50 million that it is now going to cost. I will continue to fight for the state government to deliver the eco-parklands that the Currumbin community want and deserve.

Mr Bailey interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Miller, order!

Mrs GERBER: The third item in the Gold Coast Regional Action Plan is the Varsity to Tugun M1 upgrade. This upgrade is in the slow lane under this government. Locals will be stuck in gridlock for even longer, with the budget showing that works on the Tugun to M1 upgrade are severely behind schedule.

Mr Bailey interjected.

Mrs GERBER: We were promised at the 2020 election that this upgrade would be complete next year. Budget papers reveal that that is another broken promise. The upgrade is delayed by three years. There is no excuse for this delay. Labor has been in power for more than seven years.

Mr Bailey interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Miller!

Mrs GERBER: This week we learned we have to wait another three years to deliver something they promised us would only take a year.

Mr Bailey interjected.

Mrs GERBER: It is a very congested road and not good enough.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Miller, you are warned under the standing orders.

Mrs GERBER: It is simply not good enough and I will fight to have the M1 upgrade fast-tracked. Then there is the second M1, a vital congestion-busting project for our great city. The government has been talking about this since 2015. It was set to open in late 2024. The budget papers reveal this is not even close to the truth. Eighty per cent of the funding for stage 1 of the second M1 will not even be delivered until after July 2023 and it has already blown out by \$632 million. The promise of six lanes has been broken—another Labor broken promise. Labor continues to play fast and loose with the truth of their commitments and it is our community who suffers the consequences of their broken promises. Disappointingly, not even the non-line items deliver new road upgrades for our community.

Lastly, I want to touch on the dangerous Toolona Street intersection at Tugun which has turned out to be another broken promise. At the 2020 election the government made a commitment to upgrade this intersection. This intersection needs a complete safety reconfiguration. It is very dangerous. There are accidents there all the time. It does not just need pedestrian safety; the whole intersection needs reconfiguration. That is what my community expected when the government pledged to do it. What did we get? We only got pedestrian safety fences. The feedback from my community is that it actually feels more dangerous. Matt from Tugun wrote to me saying—

The government have spent \$1.5 million on this. An eye watering sum of money for what many locals call a 'downgrade'. It doesn't work properly and most people who attempt to cross the road here risk their lives.

I have provided TMR with this feedback. Unfortunately TMR has stated no further works are planned for this very dangerous intersection. We will have to wait for the light rail to come through for another upgrade. Our Tugun community has been duded on this Labor promise.

Despite a budget with no new money for roads in our community, this government wants us to believe that they are delivering a record road and transport plan. Locals on the Southern Gold Coast who continue to lose hours stuck in traffic every day because of a lack of road upgrades do not believe this government. This is not a record budget. This is a budget of broken promises from a slippery Treasurer who says one thing and does the opposite.

This budget also fails the Currumbin electorate on rail projects. Overwhelmingly, my community wanted heavy rail over the light rail. We wanted to see improvement to our public transport capacity by connecting our community to the heavy rail network, yet capacity building on the Gold Coast heavy rail has been neglected. The state government has been drip-feeding the corridor planning for years. The forwards show that after July 2024 the government has no plan to fund this project. Labor is failing budget after budget to deliver heavy rail for the Southern Gold Coast and it is not good enough.

Then there is the light rail which has blown out by half a billion dollars. We on the Southern Gold Coast are still not being listened to. The government tells themselves from their 'tower of power' that they are listening to stakeholders in our community, but that is not how Currumbin constituents feel. I have heard the concerns of locals. My community is concerned that the light rail destroyed the Northern Gold Coast and they do not want to see the same thing happen to our community. Catherine from Bilinga does not want to see the green buffer along the Gold Coast Highway removed, a concern many locals have, including me. The trees and flora along this strip are well established and they should be preserved.

Kylie from Currumbin Waters is concerned with the disregard for local businesses that will be affected by construction. Maryanne from Tugun says, 'I am concerned about the increased access for crime in my community, and the loss of natural habitat, beauty and tranquillity that brings people to the southern Gold Coast.' Alan from Tugun has told me, 'It will create a total separation of the Western side of Tugun from the Eastern side and will create a disincentive for patrons to support our vibrant business hub by restricting access from the Gold Coast Highway into the Tugun Village.' If the light rail is to benefit our community, locals who know and love the southern end of the Gold Coast must be listened to and their concerns must be addressed.

There are projects we desperately need but they are not being funded in this budget. They are projects like the Tallebudgera Connection Road, which has a stretch that is so dangerous that locals have taken to calling it 'devil's elbow', or Tallebudgera State School, which has suffered a parking shortage for years. That lack of parking is causing major problems for road users and local businesses. It is downright dangerous. The P&C and I have been fighting for a parking solution for the school. We have started a petition. Where there is a will there is a way. I will not stop fighting for adequate parking for Tallebudgera State School.

The Palm Beach Currumbin Sports Club desperately needs the state government to give it a lifeline. The club is unable to operate normally because it is surrounded by construction bollards and the car park is closed due to the M1 upgrade and construction around that. Without immediate assistance, that vital sports club will not make it.

I would also like the state government to come to the table and help the Currumbin Beach Vikings Surf Life Saving Club with the funding issues they are having in relation to delivering their new nipper club. At the last election I advocated for \$2 million to be invested in the Currumbin Beach Vikings so that they can build a new nipper club. I was pleased that the government agreed with me and agreed to that commitment. However, due to COVID, significant flooding in February and March, and increased project costs, that \$2 million commitment will not deliver what the surf club needs. When it comes to the state government's own infrastructure blowouts they are quick to blame increasing supply and project costs, so I would like to see the government support our local surf clubs that are also struggling to find the difference.

This budget delivers to Queenslanders a wallet with nothing in it. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition spoke of the door closing on the great Australian dream. The sad reality is that tonight thousands of Queenslanders will be struggling to put a roof over their heads. That is as a result of a government that has not planned properly for the future. Last year the opposition stood in this House and warned the government of the working homeless. Now, 12 months later, once again we stand in this House with a government that has not acted. We are not here because of decisions made in this budget; we are here because of decisions that have not been made over the past seven years. This is not a problem that just develops overnight. This is a problem that has been allowed to grow over the past seven years.

Last month the Gold Coast hit a record low for rental vacancies with just 0.4 per cent citywide. On the Gold Coast we have almost 5,000 people waiting for social housing, yet since 2017 only 173 social housing bedrooms were built on the Gold Coast. This budget does not introduce one new cent or home in Queensland. No extra money will be spent to tackle the Gold Coast's worsening housing crisis.

Finally, as the shadow assistant minister for justice, I cannot ignore the state Labor government's clear disregard for my community's safety on the policing front. Crime is out of control on the Gold Coast. A Gold Coast family is lucky to be alive after a shooting this month in Coolangatta. What does this budget deliver for us? Across Queensland, how many police does this budget deliver? It is only

five! But things get worse. The funding for our safe night precincts has been cut. On the Gold Coast we have two safe night precincts, one in Surfers Paradise and one in Broadbeach. As the shadow assistant minister for the night-time economy, I find the fact that that funding has been cut extremely concerning. It threatens the safety of people who are out enjoying our night-time economy. Should someone get injured or die as a result of these cuts, it will be on this state Labor government.

This is a budget full of disappointment and broken promises, which brings me to the biggest broken promise of all. We were promised, 26 times by the Treasurer, that there would be no new or increased taxes in this year's budget. The people of Queensland elected them on that promise. In this budget we have three new taxes: we have a tax on business, an increased tax on resources and an increased tax on gaming. Why should Queenslanders believe anything this government says if they break one of their most important election promises? Not only has this government broken their promise of no new or increased taxes; they are trying to deny the fact that they even broke the promise. I kid you not. This Treasurer has taken a 'Trumpian' approach to the truth, telling the people of Queensland that he has not broken his promise because it affects businesses and not people. The Treasurer knows full well that the cost of those taxes will be passed on to the people by business. That is happening while we are in the middle of a full-blown cost-of-living crisis. This slippery, dishonest Treasurer has deliberately misled Queenslanders by not being upfront about those taxes before the last election.

I am pleased that testing for Spinal Muscular Atrophy is included in the budget. That is the one saving grace. It is the one good thing in the budget. As for the rest, it fails the Currumbin electorate. They deserve better.