



Speech By  
**Patrick Weir**

**MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE**


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## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

### **APPROPRIATION BILL**

#### **REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (11.39 pm): I rise to deliver my speech on the budget. I make this contribution as the member for Condamine and the shadow minister for natural resources, mines and energy. Once again, under this Palaszczuk government we see the state debt continue to rise with another \$4 billion in new borrowings, despite a record \$10 billion increase in revenue thanks in large part to \$5 billion from coal and \$1 billion from petroleum royalties. Despite this, total borrowings are to reach \$80 billion and state debt \$139 billion.

As we can see, it is not the level of revenue that is the problem. It is the mismanagement and poor handling of the Queensland economy by this Palaszczuk government that is the problem—all of this as our health system falls apart right before our eyes, especially the eyes of the Premier and the Minister for Health and, more importantly, everyday Queenslanders who rely on the public health system. Whilst it is great to see the need for a new hospital in Toowoomba finally acknowledged by this government, it is still six to seven years before we will see any relief for the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service. This hospital is needed now. This is just another example of more catch-up being played by this government which has demonstrated time and time again it has an inability to plan for the future.

This failure to plan will not help to ease the situation our health system faces in the here and now. This will not ease the pressure from the ambulance ramping and delays that see our public health system under extreme pressure and well past the crisis stage. This failure to plan is endemic across this government. Ministers have surrounded themselves with bureaucrats whose sole purpose is to protect the government and the relevant ministers. Not to work to resolve issues that are in the best interest of the general public, which is what the various departments were established for, is a common occurrence within this government. I have experienced this firsthand in my role as the shadow minister. There has been no greater example of this than the appointment of the DG to the Minister for Resources, Scott Stewart, when he appointed Mike Kaiser to this position. This disgraced former Labor MP immediately politicised the department of resources and it showed in the manner of both the department and the minister. It is no wonder that the morale of those on the front line is so low.

This minister plays politics with every issue that he is confronted with, whether it be mine safety, resource approvals, valuations or the treatment of the tenants at the Dockside Marina. In fact, when I exposed that the commercial operators were going to be moved out of the marina, the minister's response was to try to have me referred to the Ethics Committee instead of dealing with the problem. This was simply extraordinary and subsequently dismissed by the Speaker.

As for approvals, this minister continues to dither instead of making a decision on the granting of a mining lease on the proposed stage 3 of New Acland mine. There is no longer any reason to delay this decision. Maybe if New Hope had engaged Anacta they may have had a different result. One

wonders if the minister stood up to the Treasurer when he decided to break an election promise and introduce coal royalties. I somehow doubt it. It does not matter how the Treasurer tries to spin this; it is a broken promise, a breach of faith with the industry which is delivering a river of cash into the government coffers.

Those sorts of increases of unexpected and unaccounted expenses do immeasurable harm to industry confidence in this state and further investment. How many resource companies which were considering operating in Queensland will be having second thoughts and looking to establish themselves elsewhere where the government is seen to be less unpredictable?

There is no relief for Queenslanders experiencing higher land tax, with many paying land tax for the first time with rising property values and no changes to the land tax threshold to reflect inflation over recent years. The budget identifies rises of 5.2 per cent to land tax in 2021-22 and 10.6 per cent in 2022-23. It is no wonder the minister was unsupportive of extended appeal time for flood affected landowners who had far more pressing matters on their mind at the time of the revaluations. This minister is not across his brief and that was made glaringly obvious to anyone who saw Tuesday's question time. At a time when domestic gas supplies are on everyone's mind, the minister was absolutely clueless.

As for the Minister for Energy, Mick de Brenni, where do I start? I have stated many times regarding this minister that if you fail to plan you plan to fail. I have consistently asked this minister to provide his energy plan as we move towards the government's 50 per cent renewable energy target to give industry and consumers some assurance that we will have a safe, secure and reliable network.

**Mr de Brenni** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Pause the clock. Minister, go back to your seat if you want to interject.

**Mr WEIR:** I have asked the minister many times to give industry and consumers some assurance that we will have a safe, secure and reliable network. So far as I can ascertain, the minister now has a plan to have a plan.

A plan would have come in handy in recent times as the grid came under considerable pressure. All stakeholders have expressed concern as to the lack of any coherent transition plan which would help to avoid situations such as we have just experienced. The few comments the minister has made have only added to the confusion prospective investors are feeling about investing in the energy industry in this state. The minister has stated that he will not be closing down any coal-fired power stations. The question all investors would like an answer to is how is that going to work? These comments have been described by industry observers as either misleading, uninformed or straight-out dishonest. The minister needs to explain himself as his comments just do not make sense.

The minister needs to be honest with Queenslanders, who have just had a glimpse of what an unstable grid looks like. For the first time we have seen the regulator come in and set wholesale prices on generators and order them online to stop both price gouging and to stabilise the grid. This is an extraordinary intervention over our state owned generators. This is what you get when you do not plan. What is going to be the cost of this instruction by AEMO and who will have to pay?

**Mr Brown** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Capalaba.

**Mr WEIR:** Mr Deputy Speaker, you may remember on 1 February this year Queensland was sweltering through a heatwave and the Premier told Queenslanders to turn off their air conditioners—

**Mr Brown** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Capalaba, you are warned under the standing orders.

**Mr WEIR:**—or we could be facing load shedding across the state. This scenario was averted when a big storm hit Brisbane and blacked out a number of suburbs and the temperature dropped and load shedding was averted. In the interim, a lack of reserve 2 was issued and AEMO issued a reliability and emergency reserve trader, or RERT as it is known, to boost supply. This does not come without a cost.

**Mr de Brenni** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Minister for Energy, you are warned under the standing orders.

**Mr WEIR:** The RERT was only issued for a short period due to the storm taking so many consumers off line and only contributed 331 megawatts. So what did that 331 megawatts cost consumers? \$50,960,399. This is now on your electricity bills.

Given that AEMO stepped into the market and we have been running LOR 2 and 3 since last Wednesday, what is that going to cost? Maybe the minister can give some indication during his contribution. It is safe to say it will be in the many hundreds of millions of dollars. That account needs

to be paid and it will be passed onto Queenslanders because of the failings of this government and this minister. This minister would have you believe that power increases are a result of the high international cost of coal and gas. Is the minister really telling Queenslanders that the state owned generators do not have long-term price agreements with their coal providers? Are we really buying coal on the world spot market?

**Mr de Brenni** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Minister for Energy, you are under a warning. I ask you to leave the chamber for an hour.

*Whereupon the honourable member for Springwood withdrew from the chamber at 11.49 pm.*

**Mr WEIR:** If this is the case, it is gross incompetence on this minister's behalf. If this is the case, the cost will continue to rise thanks to the royalties rise introduced in this budget by this government. The budget allocates \$35 million for a feasibility study for a second pumped hydro which is welcome as pumped hydro is a must-have element of any renewable energy future.

I have had a number of briefings regarding the proposed Koombaloo project and I would love to see a feasibility study into this project, which is being advocated for by the Queensland Electricity Users Network. This is not to be confused with the Koombaloo project being supported by the Cairns Regional Council, the Cardstone Project. The Koombaloo project is located in North Queensland in one of the highest, most reliable rainfall regions in Australia. The project will more efficiently use the Queensland government's existing Koombaloo hydro dam and transmission network.

Every time this minister is under pressure he resorts to outlandish statements, as we saw in question time on Monday. He tried to turn the issues he was being questioned about into an attack on workers in the energy sector, which is absolute rubbish. This is a desperate attempt to deflect from his own failings.

In Condamine, yet again the Treasurer appears to have overlooked the needs of our community: joint road funding with the federal government and yet again reannouncements of school hall funding. The people of Condamine should feel very left out, including in relation to social housing funding, which for this area is the second-lowest of all the regions in Queensland. We have schools crying out for more teachers and support staff. With widespread shortages, principals, deputies and heads of departments are having to head back to classrooms instead of managing the future educational requirements of the students in their care. Finding teacher replacements is a statewide problem and our children suffer. Our public health system is in complete disarray and has gone well past the critical stage. Ambulance ramping, delays in patient care, bed shortages, staffing shortages and a lack of adequate resources have been happening for months.

While we wait for the new Toowoomba Hospital to be built the population of the Darling Downs continues to grow, and people from New South Wales, Western Queensland and the Southern Downs attend Toowoomba daily for their medical procedures and appointments which the public system will not be able to cater for. The small hospitals in Condamine outside the Toowoomba CBD are ageing, with little investment to upgrade or replace old equipment, new beds or even fresh paint or flooring. I take my hat off to the Clifton Cooperative Hospital. They operate a wonderful facility, providing great care and service to the community.

Crime, in particular youth crime, is all over the news in Condamine. We have a daily influx of calls and emails from constituents with stories of break-ins, property theft, stolen vehicles and property damage. This week a vehicle was stolen from Kingsthorpe with all of the owner's tools on board. He now has no tools and no vehicle to transport him to his workplace, which makes his life exceedingly difficult. These kids—and they are mostly kids—and their families need to start taking some responsibility for their actions. The police are struggling to keep up and are being let down by a judicial system that lets offenders back on the street to commit more crimes.

As I stated earlier, this government has once again broken its trust with the Queensland public by introducing three new taxes, despite the no new taxes pledge during the election campaign. The Treasurer has stated that the new payroll tax will only affect large businesses that employ over 100 staff. He has got to be kidding! Do he and this government honestly believe that large businesses like Coles and Woolies will not pass this on? This is a government that currently has so many inquiries into integrity matters that I have lost count, so what does breaking an election promise matter? Well, Mr Deputy Speaker, it does matter and the people of Queensland will not forget it. They deserve so much better.