



Speech By  
**Rob Molhoek**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT**


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Record of Proceedings, 24 June 2022

## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

### **APPROPRIATION BILL**

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

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (11.44 am): I rise to speak in respect of the appropriation bills. At the outset I want to acknowledge the hard work of our leader, David Crisafulli, and also our shadow Treasurer, David Janetzki. I agree with the sentiment that our leader expressed in his opening comments yesterday when he said that the greatest part of being a member of parliament is the ability to help people. I concur with that sentiment. Every day I am reminded by the people who come to my office that my job is to simply be there to help people.

If I am a little shabby this morning, it is because I participated in the CEO Sleepout last night on the Gold Coast. It was another record year, with over \$630,000 being raised. I especially want to pay tribute to Kris Martin and Tanya Mahoney, the organisers of the Gold Coast Sleepout from Vinnies. It was pleasing to hear them talk last night about the \$3 million that has been raised over the last six years and how they have been able to leverage that to borrow a further \$18 million to build 60 new apartments for people in crisis on the Gold Coast. They do great work.

There are many other great workers on the Gold Coast. I have not had the opportunity to speak with them all since the budget was handed down. Although they would be thankful that they do get funding and support from the government, I am sure that many of them would be disappointed with the lack of increased investment in public and social housing. The Gold Coast still receives less than its fair share. Over the past 12 years since 2010, the Queensland state government has invested approximately \$4.4 billion in social and affordable housing. Almost half of this—about \$1.8 billion—has been in the form of grants to community housing providers to provide housing. The balance of \$2.6 billion has been invested in new or upgraded public housing by the Queensland state government. However, over the same period, the Gold Coast has received only \$316 million, which is 7.2 per cent of the total. This year in the budget we are earmarked to receive \$29 million of the \$441 million that has been identified for the construction of new and upgraded housing, land acquisition and capital grants to community organisations. That is 6.6 per cent of the total.

I think it is important at this juncture to remind the Treasurer and the Minister for Housing that the Gold Coast has over 12 per cent of the state's population, so to receive less than seven per cent of the total spend on social housing is simply not good enough. Based on this 12 per cent population figure, we have missed out on more than \$200 million of investment over the past decade, and that is assuming that the investment that has been made was sufficient. Given the shortages we are seeing in housing and the demand for public and social housing, I think all in the House would agree that there is a need for much more. Based on current commitments by this government, the Gold Coast will miss out on

about \$50 million of its share this year and last year. Fundamentally, Queensland state housing budgets have been and continue to be grossly inadequate, and the Gold Coast continues to receive less than half of what is required to address the current housing crisis.

I struggled to find in the budget—and maybe the Treasurer can point this out to me at some point—any reference to additional drug and alcohol support on the Gold Coast, or for that matter anywhere in Queensland, in terms of facilities. We have three facilities on the Gold Coast that have been there since the 1980s and were upgraded through the 1990s: Mirikai at Burleigh; Goldbridge in Southport that operates out of what essentially is an old motel or block of flats; and the Salvation Army alcohol and rehabilitation centre at Mount Tamborine which was relocated when the Gold Coast University Hospital was built some 10 or 15 years ago. Essentially, with an increased population and an increased demand for services, there has been no investment in additional infrastructure or services for alcohol and drug treatment on the Gold Coast. Needless to say, I think Gold Coasters deserve far better.

In that respect, I want to mention a few people who do some tremendous work on the coast. I want to acknowledge the work of Michael and Corrine Barrett from Transformations who are a self-funded drug and alcohol service on the Gold Coast. I also want to acknowledge Mal and Edith Kennedy who run Set Free Care in Southport, again a largely unfunded service, but a service that provides a gateway and a meeting point for many of the government services that seek to work with homeless and disadvantaged people on the Gold Coast.

I also want to touch on matters in regard to my local schools. I note the capital statement of Budget Paper No. 3, and I went through it with a yellow highlighter pen as I was desperately looking to identify those projects that are happening within my patch. I have 18 schools in the electorate of Southport. I am grateful for the \$2.9 million for more classrooms for Bellevue Park State School which is a growing school, but because of infill development, the large number of people that have moved back to the Gold Coast, the amount of what used to be holiday rental accommodation that has now become permanent rental accommodation, and the large number of people who have moved into what was the old games village, every single school in my electorate is under pressure. It is disappointing to see that while there is some \$90 million allocated for new school halls across Queensland and for upgrades of school hall facilities, there is absolutely not one cent allocated for desperately needed facilities at Keebra Park State High School, a school that has grown from 600 to just under 1,100 students in a matter of three or four years.

I also want to note my disappointment at the fact that while there has been a lot of correspondence going backwards and forwards between the state, the Gold Coast council, myself and residents, and a number of different ministers have responded at different times over the last few years, there is still no funding or no commitment in regard to Ridgeway TAFE, the old site that was demolished and cleared, and was supposed to have been set aside for community purposes. I understand that negotiations between council and the state are ongoing. I look forward to a time when we know exactly what is planned because so many commitments have been made, but still absolutely nothing has happened in respect of that site.

What also concerns me is that while we heard a lot from the Treasurer around what a great job our police do across the state—and they certainly do—I do not think the police have ever been under so much pressure and nor have they had to deal with so many issues. What I do not see is any real commitment around an increase to police numbers at a time on the Gold Coast when we have seen an increase in youth crime and when we have seen increases in domestic violence. I am not sure what the current figure is, but I know historically about a third of the case load through the Southport police station, one of the largest police commands in the state, was just dealing with domestic violence incidents. During the hearings conducted by the Mental Health Select Committee, we also heard evidence that police are now spending more and more time looking after mental health patients and having to deal with mental health issues within the community, and we are seeing police, along with ambulance officers, ramped at some of our local hospitals, which leads me to address some of the challenges around health.

It has been stated categorically by those of us on this side of the House that there is a health crisis. There has been a lot of commentary around the timing of proposed new beds and a new hospital at Coomera. We have known for some time that this was a challenge for the Gold Coast, but there seems to be no urgent action on it. We have heard from the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service that within the next five or six years the equivalent of the entire population of Townsville will move into the northern growth corridor of the Gold Coast. I am not sure what the population of Townsville is these days—I think it is about 280,000 people—yet there is still no hospital there to service them. As we heard

from other members in the House today, even the hospital that is being proposed will be well short of the number of beds that has been recommended to service the northern end of the Gold Coast. Also disturbingly, we know that both of our two major hospitals, at Robina and Gold Coast University, for some time have been operating at more than double their built capacity in terms of the workload and the demands that are being placed on their emergency departments, and that is without even looking into significant issues around bed supply and the availability of beds.

I want to just comment very briefly on the estimates timetable because I was not given the opportunity to speak in the debate the other night. I thought it was shameful that that debate was introduced at such short notice. It has not been referred to the committees to make decisions, deliberations and recommendations around time frames, and the House was given half an hour to speak on it. I think that that is an absolute disgrace.

The Queensland health budget is at least a third of the entire state budget—in fact, it is almost half the entire state budget—but the health committee will be given 4½ hours to review the entire health budget, along with the budget of the Ambulance Service. If you break that down, there are 93 electorates across the state, so that gives us three minutes each. Assuming that all we will be doing is spending the time asking and answering questions, that will give us three minutes to talk about each electorate or raise concerns about each electorate across the state. Given that there were some 40 recommendations in the recent health inquiry that this government initiated and some fairly significant issues highlighted in that health inquiry, not just around the NDIS, not just around aged care, but also issues around workforce planning which the Queensland Audit Office has highlighted on many occasions, issues around IT failures, and significant issues and challenges facing rural and remote Queensland, I think it is appalling that the best the government will give us is 4½ hours to talk about health and the health budget in the forthcoming estimates process.

I want to turn briefly to the issue of mental health. It has been my great honour and privilege to be the co-chair of the select committee on mental health. The opposition also want to see exceptional care delivered for those Queenslanders struggling with mental health issues. It was an incredibly sobering process to sit through those many weeks of public hearings. Some of the lived experiences and stories that we heard were heartbreaking, and will continue to be heartbreaking, but there is just so much more to be done in that space.

While we raised significant concerns about the funding models, I believe that governments need to live within their means. We have never known a time of such unprecedented prosperity in terms of the increase in mining royalties, the state has enjoyed significant dividends from the sale of electricity to the southern states, and there has been natural growth in the budget. I believe that we should be living within our means and we should be looking at other measures to better fund mental health services. I look forward to seeing how the government responds to the 57 recommendations of the Mental Health Select Committee and playing a role in serving the people of Queensland in delivering better mental health.