



Speech By  
**Steve Minnikin**

**MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH**


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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

**REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (7.57 pm): This evening I am pleased to rise to respond to the Palaszczuk government's 2022-23 budget. The budget is the government's financial blueprint going forward. The other takeout message is that, going forward, the Treasurer's credibility is gone and it does not matter how he tries to justify it or frame it when looking at the mirror on the wall. In the lead-up to the last state campaign, at Kuranda he was asked by a journalist, 'Are you ruling out new or increased business taxes?' The former defeated member for Greenslopes and now member for Woodridge replied, 'There won't be any increased taxes.' Money can buy you lots of things in life but not your credibility.

I have previously commented that throwing ever-increasing record budget amounts of money into key government areas such as transport and main roads, health and education is not in itself a real measure of success. Labor seems to be simplistically equating the notion that success is defined by how much money you throw at an area. However, what matters is what you actually do with resources, rather than continually throwing borrowed money at an issue. This budget is as bereft of visionary reform as the Treasurer is of showing occasional nonpartisanship and humility. Given our total state debt level will now blow out to \$129 billion over the forward estimates, this is another budget that continues to fail future generations by avoiding the tough decisions required to be made by this generation. Very sadly, yet again, unfair intergenerational debt will continue under Labor.

I will now comment on specific areas of the budget in my capacity as the shadow minister for customer service and shadow minister for transport and main roads. I reiterate that the *raison d'être* of the transport and main roads portfolio is all about delivering an efficient and responsive statewide transport system that will connect people right across our vast state both now and into the future. Yet again, Labor's incompetent approach to the 2022-23 budget, particularly for this key portfolio, means that this worthy goal is still a long way off.

The Minister for Transport and Main Roads may have been a fine high school drama teacher, but he is clueless when it comes to basic project management 101. Is it any wonder under his watch that we have the hashtags #budgetblowouts and #railfail? I urge the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, who was well known for the infamous mangocube saga and for the budget blowouts—and I will outline these in further detail shortly—to look up the term PMBOK. I will save the tyro Minister for Transport and Main Roads the time and effort. It is an acronym for Project Management Book of Knowledge. Essentially, it is the bible when it comes to sound project management best practice principles. This quality assurance best project management approach is used around the world. Now,

the struggling transport minister should not get all excited, confusing this with his union mates' best practice industry principles, which appear to have actually contributed to his own budget blowouts as evidenced with the Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3 contract negotiations.

The Minister for Transport and Main Roads wants to talk up the transport and roads budget, tell us it is a record and say that everything is awesome. In effect, like previous years, it is more a smoke and mirrors exercise than a credible financial document for the future. I will now begin a deep dive into the transport and main roads portfolio and comment on Minister Bailey's budget blowouts. Sadly, I only have a few minutes left.

In terms of Labor's record, the minister will talk about a record \$29.7 billion QTRIP investment but, in reality, it was about recycling and reannouncements. Indeed, his \$3.5 billion rail package announcement was pretty much recycling old announcements with few new projects. Talk about a 'rail revolution'! It was more like a mangocube salad. It was strange that his announcements did not include the rail level crossing projects. Could it be because they demonstrate that the Minister for Transport and Main Roads is rarely able to deliver a project on time or on budget?

What really is Labor's track record? It is one of project delays and cost blowouts. Of course, the obvious starting point is the Palaszczuk Labor government's signature infrastructure project, Cross River Rail. Let us start with that one. In last year's budget, Cross River Rail was listed as a \$6.888 billion project fully funded by the Queensland government. It is interesting to note that this year the description has been changed to say it will be 'funded via a capital contribution of \$5.389 billion along with financing of \$1.499 billion secured through a public-private partnership'.

Minister Bailey continues to perpetuate this myth that the project will only cost the taxpayer \$5.4 billion. I come from the private sector. Does the minister seriously think that the private sector is providing \$1.5 billion for fun or for kicks? They will want a return. To date, this government has refused to release these details as it always falls back to the protection of it being commercial-in-confidence. Remember, this is a project which was not supported by Infrastructure Australia based on the BCA, so Labor said they would go it alone. There is not even an operational plan, so stay tuned on this development.

We know that there are extra project costs being hidden in other parts of the budget, so the actual cost of Cross River Rail is likely to be around \$7.4 billion. I challenge the Minister for Transport and Main Roads to dispute this figure by providing the following extra cost breakdown areas of the budget which are inextricably part of the overall Cross River Rail project.

For example, if you add the Breakfast Creek Bridge, realign track at \$34.7million; Clapham Yard Stabling at Moorooka, construct stabling yard at \$301 million; Fairfield train station to Salisbury train station upgrades, various locations, upgrade stations at \$52.5 million; Mayne Yard, relocate facility at \$22.4 million; Mayne Yard, upgrade vehicle and pedestrian access at \$96.8 million; Moolabin Power, upgrade power supply at \$18 million; and Roma Street to Exhibition Station, Normanby, construct third track at \$7.1 million, these extras total a further \$533 million. Added to the initial \$5.389 billion plus the \$1.499 billion PPP, one arrives at a total cost of Cross River Rail—kerching!—of \$7.421 billion.

Is it on time for that amount of money? The actual completion date for the project was raised at estimates last year and we now know that the project is well over a year late. As I previously stated, Labor has been caught out trying to rewrite history to cover up a project delay. I know the amateur thespian minister likes to wax lyrical about things being 'awesome' but maybe he should concentrate on actually getting things done!

But wait, we have more. There are new Minister Bailey budget blowouts in this budget: Boundary Road rail crossing was in last year's budget at \$146 million, but that has now increased to \$206 million; and Beams Road rail crossing has gone up from \$163 million to \$209 million, a 28 per cent increase. There's so many Minister Bailey budget blowouts that we will need sub-categories. Here we go with the bonus Minister Bailey budget blowouts. This is where a project has costs blown out but the initial blowout has blown out yet again.

Examples include Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3. It started at \$709.9 million. Then the project went to \$1.04 billion and now it is \$1.219 billion—a 72 per cent cost blowout. The European Train Control System original budget was \$634.3 million. There was a new project introduced in 2020-21, the New Generation Rollingstock European train control system fitment, to install new signalling. This line item was to hide a \$255 million blowout. We were advised that this new project supported platform screen doors on CRR. Whilst examining the budget papers, we now have a new project, New Generation Rollingstock automatic train operation and platform screen doors fitment, valued at \$275.7 million. Therefore, the total project cost has blown out from the original budget of \$634.3 million to \$1.367 billion, a 116 per cent cost blowout.

I have another category which is the 'bit less' Minister Bailey budget blowout. This is where the project scope is reduced. I will give some examples. The Coomera Connector has been reduced from six lanes to four, but the project has increased in cost from \$1.5 billion to \$2.1 billion, so taxpayers are paying more for less. The Cairns Ring Road was meant to go from the CBD to Smithfield, but we now know that it will only upgrade a five-kilometre section from James Street to Barron River Bridge.

Please stay with me, because we have another category of 'blocked' Minister Bailey budget blowouts. This is where projects are delayed. Some examples in this category include: the Centenary Bridge upgrade, which was promised to start construction in 2021 but still has not started; and Beams Road rail crossing, which was promised to start construction in 2021 but still has not started.

Now we move on to a rather special category: the 'blacked out' Minister Bailey budget blowout. This is where a project has been cancelled or blacked out from the budget to pay for other projects that have gone over budget. Examples in this category include the Central rail station redevelopment. With much fanfare, it was supposed to get a \$67 million makeover. Alas, it disappeared from the budget last year. The Mount Isa to Rockhampton corridor upgrade was a \$237 million project in last year's budget, but I cannot find it—zip, gone—and it is not in the budget documents. I sincerely hope it has not disappeared as well.

Just to recap these budget blowout categories we have: the bonus Minister Bailey budget blowouts; the bit less Minister Bailey budget blowouts; the blocked Minister Bailey budget blowouts; and the blacked out Minister Bailey budget blowouts. The winner of the Gold Logie for Best Budget Blowouts is the member for Miller, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Come on down, spinner! Come and collect your prize!

What about the much vaunted inland freight route? The creation of an inland freight route was a key commitment of the Labor government prior to the last state election. I acknowledge that \$4 million of the \$1 billion budget has been bought forward to 2023-24, but over \$800 million will not be spent until after 2025-26 over the forwards. It is more smoke and mirrors. When the government committed to this project before the last election, it did not tell people it would be delivered only after the next election.

Truck drivers and other users of this corridor will be disappointed with this result. I share with them their frustration and take this opportunity to thank the truck and freighting industry for the herculean job its members have undertaken with supply chain management logistics over the last couple of years.

For the last two terms under Labor, the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program, QTRIP, which outlines the current transport and roads projects, resembles a lay-by agreement—outlaying a dollar today, a few more next year and the rest in the never-never. It is all well and good for the minister to get up and talk a big game with key transport infrastructure announcements, but when one analyses the QTRIP document overlaid with the years and then seeing what was promised and what is actually funded, there is often a huge gap.

What about backlog maintenance? It has been well documented and broadcast that Labor has allowed just under \$6 billion in backlog maintenance to build up. To be more precise, the maintenance backlog as of 1 July 2021 was \$5.753 billion. The government states that the backlog amount decreased by \$99 million in the previous year. At this rate, and taking into account this budget's increase in maintenance funding of just \$69 million per year, this effectively means that the maintenance backlog will be removed in another 30 years.

Auditor-General report No. 4 says that Labor's road maintenance backlog risks the sustainability of the transport network. Thanks to Labor, our roads are more congested than ever and less safe. The Minister for Transport and Main Roads has been in the role for several years now and, rather than deflect on the previous LNP government, he needs to understand that there is a vast chasm between his media rhetoric and his track record with addressing backlog maintenance.

I have always said that the role of opposition is to hold the government to account but not to criticise merely for the sake of it. In this spirit, I would like to congratulate the department of main roads in relation to the department's Service Delivery Statement on page 8 which outlines their customer experience standards and effectiveness measures. I have previously stated that I am very honoured to be appointed the first shadow minister for customer service by the opposition leader. I take this opportunity to congratulate Transport and Main Roads staff.

I have spoken today about delayed projects, cost blowouts and broken promises. I would like to finish my speech on the appropriation bills with this one question: where is the vision in this budget? Last year the Minister for Transport and Main Roads released a regional transport plan without mode share targets and with a corridor planning diagram that was four years old and already redundant by the time it was included.

Sadly, it looks like I was hoping for too much yet again. We still do not know how the minister proposes to boost and transform our transport network to cater for the Olympic Games in a decade's time and for population growth. We still do not know how the minister proposes to get freight to its destination more efficiently to bolster supply chain management. We still do not know how the minister proposes to deal with the massive maintenance backlog. We still do not know how the minister proposes to improve traffic congestion.

While the minister may crow about a record transport and main roads spend, we need to look at the actual track record of this government. It is what you actually do that defines you and getting up each year and saying what you propose to do and not backing up is simply cheating the taxpayers of Queensland. The member for Miller has had carriage of the main roads portfolio since 16 February 2015. This is approximately 7½ years. What has he to show for it? He has a private email scandal and record project management blowouts. What a legacy. What a wasted opportunity. The ancient Athenian politician Pericles said, 'What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.'