




Speech By
Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2023

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (9.01 pm): This is a budget that fails Queenslanders. It is a budget that fails small and family business, a budget that fails the Sunshine Coast, a budget that fails generations of Queenslanders to come, a budget of inefficiency and of waste with more of the same chaos and crisis. The Premier and her ministers tell Queenslanders that only they can be trusted to fix the Queensland health crisis, Queensland's youth crime crisis, Queensland's housing crisis and Queensland's cost-of-living crisis. However, why would any Queenslander trust the Palaszczuk Labor government when all we have seen is failure after failure in those very policy areas?

We are now up to our fourth Palaszczuk government minister for health; all have been promoted after failing in that portfolio. They have been promoted to occupy high offices like the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer and the Attorney-General, but what do Queenslanders have to show for eight years of Palaszczuk Labor government incompetence? They have seen the worst ambulance ramping in the country, Queenslanders dying because an ambulance did not come in their hour of need, grandparents suffering for years due to delayed surgery that they should have had in months. That is the record of this Palaszczuk Labor government and Queenslanders deserve better.

In her contribution to this debate, the new Minister for Health spent much of her time criticising our commitment to release health data in real time within 100 days of the election. We make that commitment because Queenslanders deserve to know how our hospital system is performing and because transparency drives accountability and with accountability comes change. Let's contrast that with the record of the Palaszczuk Labor government.

The Minister for Health tried to suggest that the Palaszczuk Labor government was already providing timely health data. That ignores the fact that the Palaszczuk Labor government previously released health data each month. Then they stopped for a bit and when they recommenced releasing data they dropped it back to quarterly. Nearly every single month we are looking at data that is five months old when it is finally released. That is not transparency or accountability.

We know that the Minister for Health thinks that data needs to be cleaned before it can be released to the public and we know that the Minister for Health has access to that data. So it begs the question: why does the Minister for Health think that Queenslanders cannot be trusted with the same information? The only plausible answer is that doing so would be politically inconvenient.

While I am on the subject of the member for Waterford, I want to address her criticism of the Leader of the Opposition having the hide to raise the issue of women's economic security. Let's have a look at the performance of the Minister for Women when she was the minister for training and skills development. During her reign in that portfolio the percentage of female apprentices who completed their training fell considerably. Under the member for Waterford the number of female construction apprentices who successfully completed their training fell from nearly 72 per cent to 53 per cent. What action did the member for Waterford take? Not much!

I will give the current Minister for Training and Skills Development some credit. She identified that there was a problem in relation to female apprenticeship completion rates and there is some funding to address that issue in this budget. I would note that this funding comes nearly 18 months after the state government received a report into the issue which recommended urgent action on it. However, taking 18 months for urgent action is hardly warp speed, but it is par for the course for this tired, third term Palaszczuk Labor government.

While I am on the subject of training, let's have a look at the record of the Palaszczuk Labor government more broadly. We know that we are in the middle of a skilled worker shortage, which means that every Queenslanders pays more for essential goods and services. It feeds inflation. It is a crisis in large part due to the failures of this state government. The Palaszczuk Labor government have never met their own apprenticeship completion target. That is not just this year—never. They have never met their own apprenticeship completion target. As a result, there are at least 16,000 fewer qualified Queensland tradies and we are in the middle of a skilled worker crisis. Every single quarter since January 2021 more Queensland trainees cancelled or withdrew from training than completed training. In the five-year period from 2018 to 2022, 3,905 more construction trainees cancelled or withdrew from training than completed their training. Labor have failed to meet their school-based apprenticeship and traineeship target every single year for the last eight years. School-based apprenticeships—

Government members interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: I hear those opposite saying it is not true. However, I suggest they look at the data. The Training Ombudsman's own report will tell them that exact fact. School-based apprenticeship and traineeship completions in the last financial year were 65 per cent below the state government's own target. Over the last eight years the government have fallen short by 6,200 school-based apprenticeship and traineeship completions.

Small business has been all but forgotten by this Labor government. Aside from \$650 of compensation to cover the Palaszczuk Labor government's price gouging on electricity, there is no real support for tradies or small businesses as they deal with the exact same cost-of-living pressures and inflationary pressures that families are facing. Even that \$650 is majority funded by the federal government.

Let's look at some positives. I acknowledge that there is some funding, albeit a small amount of funding, in this budget for small business wellness, mental health support, cybersecurity and workforce advisory initiatives, nearly all of which were announced many months ago. Nevertheless, most of those initiatives will be welcomed by small businesses and chambers of commerce, but that is where it ends. There is nothing meaningful in this budget to make life easier for Queensland small and family businesses. Aside from the very limited federal government compensation for skyrocketing electricity prices, there is nothing in here to reduce the operating costs of small businesses. While the state government are paying tens of thousands of dollars to get staff to the public sector, there is no support in this budget, no measures in this budget, to ease the same pressures on small and family businesses. Even the investment pipeline from this so-called Big Build is a mirage with 95 per cent of funding falling after the next state election.

Businesses frequently tell me that they have no confidence in the economic management of the Palaszczuk Labor government, which is so often driven by reactive, short-term political imperatives. The chaos and crisis so often on display by the Palaszczuk Labor government has been writ large this week. What Queensland businesses need is a considered vision that will grow the Queensland economy. Based on what we have seen for the last eight years, it is clear that only an LNP government can provide that vision.

Turning to the Sunshine Coast, this budget is the latest in a long line of Labor budgets that ignores the Sunshine Coast. There is no funding in this budget to build the heavy passenger rail to Maroochydore so desperately needed by my community. Perhaps even worse, this budget cuts projects that are critical to tackling the challenges facing the Sunshine Coast.

I refer to projects like the upgrade to the Sugar Road and Mooloolaba Road intersection. Some 20,000 vehicles use that road every single day. The Labor state government—the minister—has acknowledged that it is congested and that it has an unacceptably high crash rate. The Labor state government promised that work would start in mid-2022, then they pushed it out to the middle of this year. Now the project has been cut. I have met with the Minister for Transport and Main Roads on that site and he acknowledged to me face-to-face that the works needed to happen. In fact, against my better judgement, I praised the Minister for Transport and Main Roads for his willingness to listen and act on that particular project, but I spoke too soon.

An opposition member: Foolish.

Mr MICKELBERG: I was foolish in that case—I should have known better. The Sugar Road and Mooloolaba Road intersection upgrade should be an example of how the system can work. Instead, this Palaszczuk Labor government have spent millions on the design and the planning, but they have built nothing. Now they have cut it. The message to the Palaszczuk Labor government is simple: enough with the announcements and the business cases. It is time to get on with the job of building the roads and the rail that the Sunshine Coast needs. If the Palaszczuk Labor government will not build the roads and the rail that the Sunshine Coast needs then a Crisafulli LNP government will, because I will not stop fighting—and my Sunshine Coast LNP colleagues will not stop fighting—for the roads and the rail that our growing community needs.

On another note, I welcome funding to construct the new school hall at Buderim Mountain State School. Such a facility has been desperately needed for many years now. In fact, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition went to Buderim Mountain State School many years ago, and he was telling me that a hall was needed back then. Since that time, Buderim has grown considerably. It is a project that I have worked on with the P&C, the school council, school leadership and the community more broadly for many years. All of those stakeholders are astounded that the state government will not allow the P&C to pay for the hall to be air conditioned. To be clear, my community is not asking for the state government to pay to air-condition the hall; rather, all we want is for the state government to allow the P&C to pay to air-condition the hall. The builder, Kane Constructions that have been awarded the tender to construct the hall, have said that they can install air conditioning for an additional \$600,000. This is another \$600,000 that the Buderim Mountain P&C is willing and able to pay, but there is one road block, and that road block is the state government.

I think it is important to note that the P&C is already contributing over \$1 million to help fund the build. This is funding that many schools have provided by the state government. The P&C are going above and beyond to deliver on P&Cs Qld's purpose of enhancing and improving facilities and resources for schools. It makes me wonder why people would volunteer for a P&C, why they would sacrifice their time when the state government seek to restrict them from delivering on that very purpose. It is important to note that the school halls at both Hervey Bay State High School and Mango Hill State Secondary College—both in Labor electorates—have had air conditioning installed as part of construction funded by the state government. This is not without precedent, and Labor need to get on with the job of delivering for all Queenslanders—not just those in marginal Labor electorates.

My community want to know why the Palaszczuk Labor government are making it so difficult for our school hall to be air conditioned. I understand that the Department of Education have commissioned a consultant to consider air conditioning the hall. In a political manoeuvre from the TV show *Utopia*, I have been told that the department and the consultant do not need to speak to the builder about their plan to air-condition the hall. Never mind that we need this resolved sooner rather than later, because the build needs to progress and the commission of an external consultant looks awfully like a play to run down the clock. The department have let the cat out of the bag. Departmental staff have said that the only people that can change the decision to not air-condition the Buderim Mountain State School is the director-general or the minister, so it is time for the minister to step up. The minister has acknowledged how important it is for students to learn in a comfortable environment. Here is an opportunity to air-condition a state school hall and have someone else to pay for it. We know that there is \$147 billion worth of debt. Someone else wants to pay \$600,000 to air-condition a hall and they will not take it. How often does a deal like that come along? Let's cut the red tape and get on with the job of air conditioning the Buderim Mountain State School hall.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the funding for two projects that are important to my community. The first is upgrades to pedestrian access near the Chancellor State College between Scholars Drive and Columbia Street. I have been pushing to get these upgrades built since May 2020. At that time, I sought funding under the School Transport Infrastructure Program, alongside Councillor Christian Dickson and the Chancellor State College P&C. It is good to see that the state government have finally come to the party and fund this project, making it safer for students to make their way to and from school.

Secondly, I would like to make mention of the bridge and shared pathway across the Sunshine Motorway at Stringybark Road. This is an area where many students frequent and, frankly, it is dangerous. There has already been \$2.8 million spent on planning for the project. It is time, once again, to get on with the job of building this important upgrade to help keep pedestrians safe.

Before I finish, I want to talk to the Minister for Education's comments this morning in her ministerial statement about the growing Palmview community. She spoke about the new high school and about how it is wonderful that it is open. Indeed, it was wonderful that the minister opened the new high school finally last week. It begs the question why we had to wait until June to open it. Parents know

what the reason was. The reason was that the school was not finished. The school was still a construction site when students walked in there in January. It was a construction site because, like so many things, this government cannot plan, cannot execute and cannot deliver. Who pays the price? Our communities pay the price. Communities like the Palmview community that had a construction site for students to walk into on their first day of school. This is replicated time and again across the state.

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: I can hear the current member for Sandgate—he will not be in a few months, I suspect—interjecting. He has been around long enough. He has seen plenty of delivery failures by a Labor government, but communities deserve better.

Another failure for the Palmview community is that they are beset by young criminals because this Labor government have cut police numbers in that community. Since I was elected in 2017, police numbers have gone backwards and the community has grown by over 6,000 people. The Labor government are ignoring our communities and Queenslanders deserve better. There are many more important priorities that my communities need, but time is against me. I will finish with this: it is time for the Palaszczuk Labor government to focus on delivering for all Queenslanders. Queenslanders know that the Palaszczuk Labor government lacks substance. They know that this tired third-term Labor government are only interested in the photo-op, but they forget about the follow-up. Queenslanders deserve better.