




Speech By
Brittany Lauga

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2023

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

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (7.32 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Appropriation Bill 2023. In doing so, I congratulate the Premier and the Treasurer on delivering a cracker of a budget. Before I get into it, I give a shout-out to my five-year-old daughter, Odette, who is watching at home. I hope that your rainbow snake is going well. I give a big thank you to my mum and dad, Sharon and Peter McKee, who are looking after her this week while I am here fighting for a better future for Keppel—not only for kids in Keppel like Odette but also for all kids right across Queensland.

The biggest surplus of any state in Australia's history, the biggest infrastructure build ever undertaken by a Queensland government, significantly reduced state debt from previous forecasts, a 10 per cent increase in health, more housing, free kindy, textbook allowances for high school students and huge electricity rebates: that is all included in the 2023-24 financial year budget. Importantly, this budget has a record \$8 billion in concessions to help Queenslanders who have been doing it tough.

Queenslanders own the state's mineral resources including coal. Coal royalties are the money paid by mining companies to the people of Queensland in exchange for the right to mine their coal. This ensures Queenslanders are compensated fairly from the earnings mining companies make from this finite natural resource. I support progressive coal royalties, as does everyone on this side of the chamber, as does the majority of my community. Progressive coal royalties mean that the royalties generated from our resources—Queenslanders' resources—go back into good jobs, better services and a great lifestyle. We can only deliver the largest surplus of any state in Australia's history as well as our state's biggest cost-of-living program, our state's biggest building program and lower debt for one simple reason: progressive coal royalties.

I have been listening to the speeches of those opposite, and I have not clearly heard them say that they would keep the progressive coal royalties, which are delivering over \$7 billion to the budget. The member for Toowoomba South was asked multiple times on radio but refused to say that the LNP supports progressive coal royalties. How can they support projects in their electorates if there is going to be a \$7 billion hole in the budget? They cannot, so they will have to cut projects and sack frontline staff across Queensland—just like Campbell Newman. Would they cut or 'prune' the \$550 electricity rebate? Would they cut free kindy? Would they cut the increase to the PTSS? Would they cut the new Moranbah Hospital in the electorate of Burdekin? It was interesting to hear the member for Burdekin talk about the benefits of royalties—like the \$48 million new Moranbah Hospital—but he refuses to say whether or not he supports progressive coal royalties.

The LNP like to take donations from coal companies, and that is the only reason their position on progressive coal royalties is so incredibly vague. Would the members for Toowoomba North and Toowoomba South cut the Toowoomba Hospital? Would the members for Nanango, Warrego, Gregory, Condamine and Southern Downs propose to cut the \$333 million for the Royal Flying Doctor Service? How would they fund the over half a billion dollar 10-year agreement with LifeFlight to provide vital

aeromedical services or CopperString 2032? The LNP have already announced that they want to cut \$10 billion from infrastructure, and the member for Chatsworth has admitted to a secret plan for \$2 billion in cuts.

For so long as there is a Labor government in this state, we will keep progressive coal royalties. All we have heard thus far is evasion, vagueness, ambivalence and ambiguity from the LNP. The Leader of the Opposition's budget reply speech was 50 minutes of fluff—sweeping, big statements with absolutely no meaning, no outcomes and no actual plan. I call on those opposite to answer this very basic question: do you or do you not support progressive coal royalties?

Mr Hart: No.

Ms LAUGA: No?

Mr Hart: No, and I'll say it in my speech.

Ms LAUGA: I take that interjection from the member for Burleigh. It is out there now. They actually do not support progressive coal royalties.

I was incredibly proud to take on the position of Assistant Minister for Health and Regional Health Infrastructure and am especially pleased to be serving as assistant minister to the new Minister for Health, the member for Waterford. The first thing I raised with the new minister was the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme, something I am incredibly passionate about. The Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme supports rural, remote and regional Queenslanders to access health care when it is not available near their home. Queensland is Australia's most decentralised state. We are the only state in the country where more people live outside the capital city than in it. If services are not available in regional Queensland, people have to fly, drive or catch the train, which can be really draining if they are quite sick and can be a logistical nightmare to coordinate multiple appointments with different doctors.

I know the plight of sick regional Queenslanders all too well. When my grandmother who lived in Gladstone was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, we did not have any cancer care available in Central Queensland. She would fly every few weeks from Gladstone to Brisbane. I was living down here going to uni, so I would pick her up in my Holden Barina and drop her at the Royal Brisbane for her to have chemotherapy and drop her back at the airport afterwards. I saw firsthand how difficult it can be to travel from regional Queensland to access health care in the city when you are really sick. That is why I am so incredibly pleased that the Palaszczuk government is increasing the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme as part of this year's budget.

With respect to Keppel, I am very pleased that this budget includes the funding for the Yeppoon-Rockhampton road project—the road upgrade that those opposite and One Nation tried to stop but an upgrade which is critically important for the over 11½ thousand vehicles that use that road every day. The Acting Speaker has reviewed and approved my speech on the budget for incorporation and, as such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated into the *Record of Proceedings*.

The speech read as follows—

I'm pleased that the funding for the Emu Park Rocky Road upgrade is included—these brand new overtaking lanes will improve the safety and efficiency of this busy arterial route for tourists, businesses and commuters.

The Budget also includes funding for the Rockhampton Ring Road, improvements to PCYCs, infrastructure for Great Keppel Island, schools, the Emu Park Sewage Treatment Plant, a significant school infrastructure spend including \$818,000 for minor school maintenance projects across Keppel. I know schools love a fresh coat of paint, new roofs, disability access and improvements to playgrounds and facilities. It's great for students, staff and the entire school community to see their school improved.

I'm keen to see the Capricorn Coast Brothers Junior Rugby League project included in the Budget as well as the Capricorn Coast Memorial Gardens project, which will provide Livingstone residents with a landscaped parkland setting as a final resting place for their loved ones.

The First 5 Forever Program has an allocation of \$223,000 which although is a small amount, I consider this program to have a huge impact. Improving the literacy of children under 5 is one of the most effective ways to give children a great start to life and that's why I will always back literacy programs like First 5 Forever and I thank the librarians who run it in our local libraries.