




Speech By
Hon. Di Farmer

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2023

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

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business, Minister for Training and Skills Development and Minister for Youth Justice) (2.25 pm): I was listening to the opposition leader's budget reply speech yesterday. Sixteen months out from the election, it should have been his manifesto for Queensland about who he is and what he stands for. It should have outlined what he has to offer as an alternative government, and it should have paid respect to Queenslanders by actually outlining his plans for them. It is all very well to talk about cutting consultants here and putting someone on a council there and the government should be doing this and that, but really it was little bits and pieces that he had written down as he sat down for a cup of coffee, written them on the back of an envelope like a shopping list and then chucked them into his budget reply speech.

He wants to be the Premier of Queensland and we still have no vision from him. We have a little bit of a shopping list with a lot of whining around it to give it a bit of bulk and colour. I want to ask the opposition leader just what is his vision for Queensland. What are his plans for our economic future? What are his plans for Queensland communities? What are his plans for the social fabric of Queensland?

I do need to go directly to the youth justice part of his speech since he spent so much time talking about it and so much time in the budget reply speech talking about victims with elephant tears. If he did care so much about victims, where is his plan for addressing the real impacts for youth crime? Where is his response to the victims of crime report which the Premier commissioned and was tabled several weeks ago? He does not seem to have noticed that. Where is his actual plan for youth justice, and not just three-, four- or five-word slogans that will add anything to our own strong plan?

This is what our plan is about: strong laws, with the number of serious repeat offenders in detention increasing and the length of time they are in detention increasing; record investment in prevention and early intervention and detention, with new detention centre beds built and to be built; adopting the best ideas on early intervention that are based on evidence; early intervention and prevention that is showing real results; and supervising, detecting, policing and arresting and courts detaining serious repeat offenders.

I say to the opposition leader: how dare you insult victims with your slogans that give false hope because there is nothing behind them. They are literally three-word slogans.

On the other parts of my portfolio, what did the Leader of the Opposition have to say in his nearly hour-long budget reply speech, we all had to sit through, and the 19 tweets he did yesterday? We have scoured them. Did the opposition leader say anything about small business, those people who are the heart and soul of the local community, the people who account for over 97 per cent of all Queensland business and employ almost half of the private sector employees? No, he did not. Did he say anything about employment or jobs or workforce shortages that are the number one issues facing business? No, he did not. Did he say anything about skills and training which are the very pathways that get people into jobs and opportunity? No, not one mention.

In our budget, we respond to every single one of those issues, and the number one issue which is facing every Queenslanders—and I have heard those opposite talking about how we do not know what Queenslanders are talking about every single day. Every single day, every single person talks about cost of living—it does not matter who you are—and that is what this budget responds to.

There are the energy rebates for individuals and businesses as well as free kindy for four-year-olds accessing up to 15 hours of kindy. Mums have said to me, 'This helps me get back to work.' The other rebates, subsidies and concessions are going to make such a difference to so many people. We promised a budget that was going to ease cost-of-living pressures. It is a national issue and that is exactly what we are delivering in spades.

We have the Big Build on education, health and transport infrastructure. These are the things for the people. That is why it is a Labor budget, and it is being funded by progressive coal royalties. We have all listened to members opposite. They have a big whinge and then they finish their speech saying, 'I'm getting a hall at such-and-such a school,' or, 'I'm getting this upgrade, but I also want \$3 million worth of this and \$5 million worth of that.' How do they think they are going to pay for it? I am keen to hear today whether or not they are supporting progressive coal royalties, because that is the way we actually get funding for those sorts of things.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have lots to say about what is happening in the rest of my portfolio and in my local area, but I have permission from the Acting Speaker to incorporate the remainder of my speech into the *Record of Proceedings*.

The speech read as follows—

But Speaker I would like to refer to that part of the Budget that relates both to my portfolio and to my beloved electorate of Bulimba.

On my portfolio:

This Budget makes an investment of almost \$1.35 billion in skills, training, employment and small business support.

The funding will help deliver quality training and career pathways to meet Queensland's increasing workforce demands now and into the future.

And support to Queensland's small business sector, which is such a vital contributor to the state's economy.

- A total of \$86 million is being invested to revitalise and upgrade training infrastructure to deliver key projects such as:
 - the Eagle Farm Robotics and Advanced Manufacturing Centre.
 - the expansion of Great Barrier Reef International Marine College in Cairns to deliver world-class maritime training.
 - the Bohle Renewable Energy Centre at the TAFE Queensland Trade Training Centre (Bohle) in Townsville.
- \$29.8 million over three years to replace the vocational education and training (VET) information and communication technology systems, this includes \$8.8 million in 2023-24.
- \$4.6 million over two years for the Women in Trade Apprenticeships Mentoring Program to boost the ranks of women in trades and increase retention and completion rates.
- \$5 million over two years for cyber security support initiatives for small to medium enterprises, with funding held centrally.
- Support for the establishment of Queensland Indigenous Business Network to provide support and advocacy for the growth of First Nations businesses.
- Up to \$1 million committed to assist with the development of the Cairns Indigenous Training Centre to provide First Nations people in the Far North with a tailored trade training facility.

Speaker

Queensland's economy is going from strength to strength and the 2023-24 State Budget reflects that strength.

This is great news for Queensland in terms of employment.

In fact an extra 280,000 jobs is forecast for Queensland by 2024-25.

To help address the demand, the 2023-24 State Budget will allow for the continued delivery of the Good People. Good Jobs. Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022-2032.

The Strategy, which was launched last year, has already delivered or started delivery on 23 key initiatives.

This is set to expand considerably over the next financial year.

The Queensland Government is not just focused on the workforce needs of today and those of the future but we are committed to ensuring there is the right alignment of training with workforce challenges.

The Big Build announcement highlights unmatched job opportunities across the State as we embark on a very exciting future.

Our economy is diverse and expanding into new industries, requiring the training system to anticipate and deliver a skilled workforce to ensure continued economic growth.

Fee Free TAFE in 2023, which is delivered by TAFE Queensland and Central Queensland University, will continue to be available for Queenslanders looking for a pathway to their dream career or even a career change.

To date, over 32,000 Queenslanders have been supported in Fee Free TAFE courses across more than 80 qualifications.

In addition to some of the newly funded programs, we will also continue our unwavering support of the lifeblood of our communities and our economy—small businesses.

We will provide a number of programs to support them, including:

- the successful Big Plans for Small Business grants programs.
- \$5 million over two years for cyber security support initiatives for small to medium business.
- We will continue to support our small businesses through payroll tax rebates including 50 per cent for Apprentices and Trainees being extended until 30 June 2024 and extending the discount on payroll tax for eligible regional businesses.
- \$650 energy rebate for small businesses.
- A Queensland Indigenous Business Network to provide support and advocacy for the growth of First Nations businesses.

I continue to be so proud of the incredible work being carried out by our Employment, Small Business and Training and Youth Justice departmental staff.

And have been delighted, as I have travelled around the state in my newly aligned portfolio with Director General Mr Bob Gee, to hear the genuine hope that that alignment between skills and training and employment—and youth justice—holds for so many stakeholders and staff.

And this brings me to the youth justice part of my portfolio.

Our commitment in Youth Justice includes \$446.4 million in whole-of-government funding over five years to focus on community safety, tackle the complex causes of youth crime and help boost police numbers.

In 2023-24, the department has a record expenditure budget of \$396.5 million so it can continue to deliver on youth justice initiatives and services.

A wide range of intervention and diversionary programs will receive increased funding of \$189.5 million over five years to complement the tough new laws introduced this year in the Strengthening Community Safety Act 2023 that target serious repeat youth offenders.

This will support our youth co-responder teams, intensive case management, the specialist youth crime rapid response squad and On Country programs, with a focus on support for regional Queensland.

The allocation of \$78.1 million over four years to extend and expand youth co-responder teams, includes new teams for Toowoomba, Brisbane South, Ipswich, Fraser Coast and Mount Isa.

Our co-responder teams are made up of police and youth justice workers who engage with young people to deter offending. And we have already seen a 95% compliance rate by the almost 60 000 young people our teams have already engaged with.

Intensive case management will be expanded with \$30.1 million over four years, to allow youth justice workers to focus on specific young people at risk of becoming involved in the youth justice system. We have seen a 51% reduction in offending frequency with this program, and a 72% reduction in the proportion of crimes against the person.

We know Intensive Case Management works.

The Budget also provides \$25.4 million over four years to extend and expand the Intensive Bail Initiative for repeat offenders with complex needs. We have already seen almost 9000 contacts through this program.

Early evidence shows us these programs and services are working to reduce reoffending and increase community safety.

We will also introduce a new specialist youth crime rapid response squad involving police and youth justice workers to target high-risk offending with \$5 million over three years for the youth justice aspect.

And I want to take a moment to again mention Jonathan Thurston and the wonderful work he's doing through his JT Academy.

Yesterday I had the honour to stand up with the police minister and the Premier to announce \$4.73 million support for the JT You Got This program.

This is a 10-week program for young people at risk of entering the youth justice system. And we already know it works.

It's exciting. It's innovative. And I'm very much looking forward to seeing it rolling out.

While early intervention and prevention are key to keeping Queensland communities safe, we know there are young people who will commit crimes.

And those young people must—and will—be made accountable, which is why we are investing in youth detention, with new beds coming online to ensure those who need to be detained are in age-appropriate facilities with onsite education.

To that end, \$8.8 million has been allocated in this budget for preliminary work and procurement activities for a new youth detention centre at the Woodford Correctional Precinct in South-East Queensland and to finalise a site for a new youth detention centre in Cairns.

Both centres will include design elements to support rehabilitation, including small accommodation units, multi-purpose areas for education and training, and spaces for cultural connection.

Speaker I was so delighted to see some great commitments for my beloved electorate of Bulimba.

The new Assembly Hall at Seven Hills State School will be built this year.

There'll be \$800 000 to refurbish Block A at Murarrie State School—and Principal Craig Marshall could not have been more excited when I rang to tell him.

And \$600 000 up do unplanned maintenance and minor works at our local state schools.

Speaker in an inner city electorate like ours, where public transport is such an important means of addressing traffic congestion, I have been delighted at the budget allocations for our train and bus infrastructure.

Following on from the significant work that's already been carried out at Murarrie and Cannon Hill stations in previous years.

This year we'll see the major upgrade at Morningside Station being undertaken.

And further work for the ticket office and toilet at Cannon Hill station.

And we'll spend \$7.3 million of the \$12.4 million allocated to upgrade the Cannon Hill Shopping Centre bus interchange.

\$314 000 has been allocated to Foodbank at Morningside to help feed some of our most vulnerable Queenslanders.

Our wonderful local arts organisations Vulcana Circus and Backbone Youth Arts are receiving funding. They give such delight to so many.

Speaker I want to thank the Treasurer and his team for his remarkable Budget.

A budget that responds to the needs of Queenslanders.

Now and in the future.

That is brave and strong.

That is a Labor budget.

And that I am proud to support as a Minister and local Member.