




Speech By
Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (11.16 am): I am pleased to rise to speak to this budget, as there are a number of important issues with regard to my portfolios, the state of Queensland and my electorate of Maroochydore.

I will just make a reference to the Coaldrake report and the *Let the sunshine in* recommendations that have not yet been tabled in legislation before the House. In accordance with parliamentary rules, I cannot refer to those that are within the legislation just tabled until that bill is debated. In particular, we are still waiting for the provisions around the 30-day release of cabinet records.

I wonder how much effort is going into how the government can find new boltholes where they can bury stuff, because they have used some of the committees and abused the committee process to not be transparent and to bury stuff. The 30-year rule of committees has been taken and abused. There are committee chairs and Labor backbench henchpeople who have deliberately used the weight of their numbers to prevent minutes from being released that show the efforts of non-government members to apply greater scrutiny to this government. This Labor government has abused the committee process. It was originally set up to bring about greater transparency, but now the Labor majority members are not only gagging debate within those committees but threatening those members if they dare talk about what is happening in the committees if they have not released the minutes—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Pause the clock. Members, I will start warning people straightaway. I want to hear what the member for Maroochydore has to say.

Ms SIMPSON: This is a key integrity matter that the government does not want to address. They are happy to try and use committees and abuse the process to bury things and gag members. They then threaten members who try to raise issues within those processes if they dare speak about it because they have been legally gagged behind closed doors.

This budget proves Queenslanders cannot trust the Palaszczuk Labor government to fix the chaos and crisis impacting their lives every day. Revenue has never been higher, but services have never been worse due to the mismanagement of this Labor government. The Palaszczuk government does not deliver on its promises to Queenslanders and Queenslanders can no longer trust this government. We know that the Palaszczuk Labor government has spent at least \$423 million on the big four consulting firms in the last five years. We know that this amounts to—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Sorry, member for Maroochydore. Member for Logan, member for Southern Downs and member for Mermaid Beach, cease your conversation across the chamber.

Ms SIMPSON: The government spent at least \$423 million on the big four consulting firms in the last five years, and that amounts to \$234,000 every single day. The Coaldrake report said—

Part of the problem is an identifiable loss of capacity in the public service which has been accelerated by what is now an overreliance on external contractors and consultants.

An example is KPMG's engagement for the Cross River Rail project, and I will table an excerpt from their website where they talk about evaluating the models for the project. This has effectively put them in the box seat for the procurement phase, and I am sure it helped them get the job to manage the construction. Now they claim to be locked in, according to the way this website reads, for the operations phase. Is it for a full 30 years of the PPP contract? There are many questions to be answered. I table that excerpt.

Tabled paper: Document, undated, titled 'Cross River Rail: transforming travel in ...' [886](#).

That is why the LNP under our leader, David Crisafulli, has announced a plan to ensure that we focus on having independent consultancies that do not suck the capacity from the public sector but actually ensure the key focus is having that capacity within the public service. The state government still do not get it; they do not comprehend what they have done by outsourcing a lot of the capacity into the private sector, into the big four.

We noticed that one in five of the directors-general actually came from one of the big four consulting firms, and that would apply to many of the deputy directors-general as well. Three of the directors-general were with KPMG as partners, advisers or directors; one of the directors-general was from Deloitte; there are those from PwC who are directors-general; and there are a raft of others as directors-general. We want to ensure that the public sector is independent and that it continues to serve Queenslanders first. We want them to be supported not only in a professional way but foremost in the way they service Queenslanders, because Queenslanders deserve that. We want the best public service in Australia. We want to ensure they have the resources they need to capably manage projects such as Cross River Rail.

Let me address some other aspects in regard to funding. I welcome the additional funding in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General to implement a number of the integrity recommendations of Coaldrake, but we are still to see the detail of how that is to be rolled out. We want to see that. We certainly want to see when the cabinet documents process will be released. I also believe we need to see, as our leader said, reform of the estimates process and the committee process so that they act transparently and they do not gag members behind closed doors.

Let me talk about ministerial staff. The government's priorities are clearly with their own media and marketing because we have seen a nine per cent increase in communications, media and marketing within government ministerial staff and a 14 per cent increase in ministerial staff, yet police numbers have decreased in Queensland since the last election by 0.6 per cent and disability support workers have decreased by 11 per cent. That is where this government's priorities are. They are not employing the additional police that they promised. An approved police officer is not an actual police officer who can go out and respond to the increasing incidents of youth crime and other crime that our communities are bearing the brunt of. We have seen a reduction in police numbers by 72 since the 2020 election.

The Labor government also claim they increased social housing by 4,000 in the last eight years, but the audited figures show there has been a net increase of only 1,395. That is a big difference. When they start to talk about big targets again, we have to look at the reality of what they have done and they are far short. While we have record numbers of people who are homeless, this government cannot even keep their promise about what they said they would deliver in the last few years and budgets. They are talking about future budgets but they have failed to realise their targets in previous budgets. Social housing grew just 2.7 per cent, while the Queensland population grew 12 per cent. The social housing waiting list has ballooned. In the private sector, we see there has been a failure to meet targets with the release of new land.

This Labor government promise big as to what they will do and then they mislead people about the things they said they would not do—such as no new or increased taxes. The Treasurer promised 26 times not to have new or increased taxes, but that promise was broken. They are continuing to put taxes on GP practices. At a time when GP practices are struggling, the government are actually adding to that burden with taxes and they have not relented in that regard. They did back down on the renters tax, but that was after a great battle to make them realise that taxing some of these very necessary private investments for housing was not going to help get more people into housing.

At a time of a record income and a sugar hit from high royalties, what will be the actual legacy? A lot of the construction is in the outer years; it is certainly not now when it is needed. Many of the projects are only in the planning stage, with the out years still to see substantive funding allocated.

Meanwhile, the government wasted \$200 million on the Wellcamp quarantine hub, which Queensland does not even own. Then the red carpet Premier spent \$64,000 on her cabinet Christmas party. That was \$700 a minute for that little flash bash. It just shows us how out of touch the government are with their priorities. They hold expensive Christmas parties while people are living in tents and they fail to meet their housing targets.

I want to talk about my electorate and I certainly want to talk about the need for heavy rail to Maroochydore. The state government first said there would be \$6 million for a business case. Now we see in QTRIP there is \$14 million for a business case.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Logan and member for Mermaid Beach, this is your final warning. Cease the cross-chamber chatter.

Ms SIMPSON: I will start again. I want to talk about rail to Maroochydore. This government were first spending \$6 million on a business study and now they are talking about \$14 million, but there is still no money allocated to put a shovel in the ground and get it started. There is another \$15 million for another public transport study on the Sunshine Coast. That is nearly \$30 million for planning and business studies but there is not a shovel in the ground—no deadlines, no time frames and no commitment.

Meanwhile, the concern is that the \$1.6 billion that was allocated by the previous federal government and was there under the new federal government is now potentially frozen while it is being reviewed. We must see a commitment from this government—not to just sink all its funds into wasteful projects that have not been properly scoped, such as the Gabba rebuild at \$2.7 billion. I would like to see the business case on that. I would like to see the value that is going to be added out of a \$2.7 billion project or better ways to achieve those facilities more cost-effectively. If the government released the business case on that, we might start to believe that this government had a plan in the first place.

In regard to rail to Maroochydore, that corridor has been in place for a number of decades. It is time to get building, not just shift the bulldust on this. It is time to make it happen, particularly with the 2032 deadline of the Olympics and the expected growth into the future. There have been no shovels in the ground, just more consultants—which is this Labor government's way—and no transparency about time frames to unlock that.

I turn to cost of living. We have heard about the Callide coal-fired power station and the fact the government misled the public about the impact this would have on electricity prices. They also misled the public about the time this key generator would be offline.

I want to talk about Mooloolaba Harbour. The harbour entrance is still unsafe. We still have not seen what the permanent solution is that will be put in place from the government, and we have not seen the community reference group convened by the government for something like six months. Meanwhile, once again, fishers are having their trawlers run aground and boaties are saying to me, 'What is the government doing?' They have gone silent on this. They have spent money on processes, but those processes have ground to a halt. There has been no transparency when we must see the right permanent solution, the right transparency and engagement with community, not just hoping it will go away while lives are still at risk and will be at risk until the appropriate actions are taken.

There is also the issue that we have with the M2M, which is the pedestrian and cycleway upgrades between Mooloolaba and Maroochydore. This government is spending about \$2 million on a planning study. The transport minister promised the community when that project was redesigned that the money would remain. It is nowhere in QTRIP. That is a broken promise. There is a need to ensure that cyclists and pedestrians and all the users of that space are kept safe and that the government once again does not throw millions of dollars at planning studies that go nowhere and do not address the issues that people have. I want to see timely and appropriate spending on infrastructure to make sure the Sunshine Coast has the integrated public transport network they need. It is time for shovels in the ground, to back rail to Maroochydore, to back an integrated public transport system and to ensure that we have the right services.

The health minister says that there is no such thing as unfunded hospital beds, yet I have heard there could be as many as 70 beds that are still awaiting appropriate staffing at Sunshine Coast University Hospital. I have also had a cardiac patient constituent approach me who said his doctor had told him that he is on a backlog, that he is beyond the clinical time frames for his surgery, because they have not funded enough of the beds that should be available at Prince Charles Hospital. That is what he has been told. Apparently the health minister has a different view. Patients are waiting far too long. They need to put the money at the front line of services rather than on their cabinet parties and wasteful, never-ending spending on their consultant mates.

(Time expired)