




Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**

**MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2023

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

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (12.42 pm): Never will Queensland see the LNP on this side of the House. If that is the best they can do, I suggest they go back to the drawing board because talk is cheap. What the Leader of the Opposition's speech in reply—and that of the shadow Treasurer—shows is that they are completely out of touch. Clearly, the survey research is showing that they have an issue with the Public Service—and rightly so. People have an issue in trusting those opposite. Those opposite have an issue with credibility. How do you try to get credibility? You try to demonstrate that your opposition has a lack of credibility by making out that you have the credibility to deliver. It is clearly what the research is showing. To talk about trust in government—and the environment, for goodness sake—after what they did when in government is extraordinary. They talk about youth crime without acknowledging that all over Australia and the world there are similar concerns in this area. Every state and territory has been experiencing this. In order to try to control it or something about it, what did they bring in when they were in government? They brought in boot camps. They absolutely failed.

They talk about the funding of infrastructure yet they do not talk about the economic activity that generates the jobs. They are saying that they guarantee—or they did not actually say that—that all of them would come in on time and on budget. I did not hear the Leader of the Opposition guarantee that no project will blow out, no project will increase in costs or no project will not come in on time. There were no guarantees that there will be no cost increases. When it comes to the issue of crime—and all of us in this House are concerned about it—there was no guarantee that they will stop crime completely, because no government can do it. I do not care who they are. We know that there are victims out there and we want to support them. There is money in this budget to do that. But there will be victims not matter who is in government. That is the reality. It is not about politics and talk; it is about delivering what the people of Queensland need. This budget is delivering it in spades.

They did not mention one word about jobs—the most significant issue. I would like to go back and read the Leader of the Opposition's speech and see whether jobs were mentioned. There was no mention of the unemployment rate in this state—the lowest we have seen in Queensland's history. As advised by the Deputy Premier in his contribution, there have been 500,000 new jobs created since we have been in government. People in employment generates economic activity.

Those opposite talk about health, yet in the few years they were in government health was absolutely decimated. They will never gain the trust of public servants because of the manner in which they were treated. Their numbers were decimated when they were in government, no matter what their research says or no matter what they promise. We heard them say, 'We will have the best Public Service', yet they could not make one agreement in their three-year term of government. Everything we have done in industrial relations to support workers in this state has not been supported by those opposite, yet somehow they are going to wave the magic wand and it is all going to happen. As I said earlier in my speech, talk is cheap. It is about delivering. When it comes to health, who will ever forget

not just the decimation of staff numbers and frontline services that we had to rebuild but the waiting list for the waiting list for the waiting list. Their response to health issues is, 'We are going to issue a report.' Good luck with that one because if that is what you are proposing I do not think you will get the trust of Queenslanders.

I am proud to stand in this House as a minister of the Palaszczuk government and speak about this budget. This budget helps ease the national cost-of-living pressures impacting Queensland while investing in health care, housing and infrastructure for our growing state—issues grossly ignored in the opposition leader's speech in reply. It tackles national cost-of-living pressures. I do not think I remember a situation as an adult like the situation we are in post COVID—all of a sudden they are in the denial phase. People such as my constituent Kevin Seymour, a very respected developer in this state, says that never in his lifetime has he seen the construction industry in this way. We have Scott Hutchinson from Hutchinson Builders, one of the most respected builders in Australia, coming out saying they have never seen the building industry in Australia and in Queensland this way in their lifetime. Yet those opposite completely ignore the post—

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** It is like he is going to come in, wave the magic wand and everything will be hunky-dory—'Just trust us, public servants, because we are going to make you the best.' I think we need more than words to be able to deliver that, because actions speak louder than words, and the member's actions require a lot of talk in order to convince people.

This budget also responds to those national health and housing pressures. Like I said, I have never seen 12 interest rate increases in a row ever before. Somehow they ignore all of that and say that it has nothing to do with anything in this state. They are living in a bubble. They are trying to convince themselves that they have all the answers by getting up and listing complaint after complaint, whinge after whinge, issue after issue, without talking about one single worthy policy that is going to address any of it.

This budget sets us up for the future with major investment in our Energy and Jobs Plan. Do they think we are going to deliver \$60 billion of infrastructure overnight? 'When's it going to happen?' they ask. Are we going to build it overnight? It just goes to show their lack of—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** Well, they were going to bring air conditioning into schools and it was going to take eight years for them to do that! Yet they are questioning us about a \$60 billion Energy and Jobs Plan. They have to be kidding.

They had the opportunity to deliver Cross River Rail and they turned their backs on it. It would have been built by now. They turned their backs on \$750 million from the federal government and they would not build it. It would have been built by now. They are trying to convince us that they are going to deliver not only the infrastructure that this state needs but also the infrastructure needed for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Talk is cheap. Actions speak louder than words.

Our investment will unleash new industries and jobs in our regions. All of this is only possible because we own our public assets—we are not going to sell them—and we are making sure Queenslanders, especially in our regions, are getting a fair share from current high coal prices. Those opposite have not convinced us about what they are going to do with those royalties.

We have once again delivered a record education budget of \$17.8 billion—up 8.3 per cent on last year. That is a real record increase in funding. The Palaszczuk government will always invest in the future of our kids and grandkids through both school and early childhood education. We will give the children of Queensland the best possible start in life and support our tireless teachers, educators and staff every step of the way.

Delivering a world-class education allows every child to reach their full potential, and it should start early. That is why we have asked Queenslanders what they thought of our free kindy. More than 6,500 responded to our survey, with 98 per cent saying it would help them and their families. We have listened and we have acted. As the education minister, I am incredibly proud, as we all are on this side of the House, to be bringing free kindy to Queensland.

From next year, every child of kindergarten age will receive 15 hours of kindergarten for 40 weeks—a total of 600 hours a year free of charge, whether they are enrolled at a sessional kindergarten or a kindergarten program in a long day care centre. This additional investment of \$645 million will bring the total investment in kindy to over \$2 billion over the next four years. This is a long-term reform that will not only provide lasting positive results but also provide immediate cost-of-living relief for families feeling the crunch, with savings of \$4,600 a year for thousands of families in community kindergarten and around \$1,800 for those in long day care, depending on their circumstances.

We put our toe in the water with Kindy for All and we are now going the next step. We want to ensure that those 8,000 kids who are not in kindy will get the benefit of free kindy. There is also \$120 million for staffing, \$112 million for those from a disadvantaged background and \$91 million for children with a disability. We want to work with Down Syndrome Queensland, Autism Queensland, Hear and Say and other organisations to give our kids the best start, and this ticks all the boxes.

Equity and Excellence is how we are going to be focused on the learning outcomes. Our \$17.8 billion education budget has millions of dollars dedicated to Equity and Excellence. This includes: \$210 million for our new Educational Futures Institute—a flagship program that will provide professional development and wellbeing support; \$66 million for enhanced principal support; \$177 million for our bandwidth upgrade so that our kids can get online and learn as well; \$82 million for a virtual academy; \$30 million for our innovative Turn to Teaching and Trade to Teaching programs; and an \$8 million boost to grants and scholarship programs helping to get more people into teaching. The list goes on. There are many very good initiatives in this budget to bring about equity and excellence in our teaching.

The Palaszczuk government will deliver on infrastructure—as I said, four times the amount spent by those opposite when they were in government. We have a 10-year \$1 billion rolling land fund so as the land becomes available in our growing areas we can take those opportunities and get the sites that we need to deliver. We have \$120 million set aside for a new special school in Logan and for Springfield Central State High School to undergo a major expansion. We have \$358 million invested in new general and specialist areas. We have also allocated over \$100 million for the relocation of the East Brisbane State School, and the report in regard to that will be out very soon.

Other education highlights are that we have more teachers. We have the Great Teachers Great Future election commitment. We are on target to meet that election commitment. I am very excited to be delivering a fantastic education budget that will deliver targeted resources like Clontarf, STARS and—

**Ms Pease:** Darling Point Special School.

**Ms GRACE:** Darling Point Special School, which we visited recently. There are so many projects and so many great things that we are doing to ensure kids get a great start.

In the racing portfolio, racing has never been better and it is going from strength to strength. They are capitalising on our new funding model and delivering real and great benefits. In the industrial relations portfolio, we are leading the nation. I remember recently we had some federal commissioners here and they were complimenting us on how Queensland has led the nation on so many fronts—all not supported by those opposite.

In my electorate of McConnel, my constituents will appreciate the \$550 electricity rebate and my pensioners will appreciate the \$1,072 rebate. They will get a lot of electricity for free. As electricity goes up—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** Don't muddy the waters. Talk about our rebates. Talk about the amount that they are going to be getting to offset that. The same thing is happening everywhere else in Australia.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** You may laugh but they are going to get the rebate in their pockets. I say: bring back Deb. That is what I do say.

There is nearly \$700,000 for the all-important ongoing maintenance in our schools. My constituents will benefit from free kindy, Cross River Rail and train stations. There are so many investment opportunities in our state.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** Well may you ask why did I say that? I really believe that, after that speech, you should bring back Deb. I am proud to be associated with this budget. I commend it to the House.