




Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2023

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

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (11.32 am): I rise to give my support to the 2023-24 Queensland budget. I would like to first congratulate the Treasurer, the Assistant Minister for Treasury and the entire leadership team for the work they have done in delivering this budget. I am extremely proud to be a part of a Palaszczuk Labor government that is committed to helping Queenslanders with cost-of-living relief. I know many people across my electorate of Ipswich are feeling the pinch right now, like people right across the state. There is rising inflation, rising interest rates and some are really struggling with household bills, groceries, mortgages and rents. When there are Queenslanders out there who are living pay to pay and sometimes having to make difficult choices of whether to buy groceries or pay the power bill, providing relief is the right thing to do.

Our Big Build capital investment spend in this year's budget will also provide Queenslanders with essential services they need. It is the biggest building program in our state's history, and I can see it happening before my eyes in my electorate of Ipswich. It is building the infrastructure for the future, one that will support our state's growth and create more jobs, new industries, better communities and stronger regions.

Our massive investments and cost-of-living relief measures and infrastructure projects can only be done because of our government's commitment to progressive coal royalties. The \$10.5 billion increase in coalmining royalties in 2022 and 2023 means that we can deliver increased concessions and savings for people in Ipswich and all over Queensland, and it means that we can deliver a \$550 electricity bill rebate for all Queensland households and a massive \$1,072 electricity rebate for seniors and concession card holders.

It also means we can deliver free kindy for Queensland children, saving families around \$4,600 a year on kindy fees. We all know that kindy gives kids a better start in life. We know that they have better outcomes in the education system if they have been to kindy. This will be a game changer. This investment alone will mean that more parents, especially women, will be able to go back to work to take on more hours to help meet household expenses.

Our better-than-expected coal royalties are helping to fund our \$89 billion Big Build infrastructure projects such as new hospitals and the expansion of existing hospitals, like the Ipswich Hospital in my electorate. The royalties are supporting our investment in social and affordable housing construction, renewable energy infrastructure and transport infrastructure.

The opposition are supportive of this investment—we hear it speech after speech—especially in their electorates. Coal royalties are contributing \$7 billion to this budget, but I have not heard anyone from the opposition say whether they support the progressive coal royalties or if they would keep them if they were elected. How can they support projects in their own electorates if they do not have this revenue stream? What will they cut first? Our hospital expansion projects? Our electricity rebates? Our social and affordable housing construction projects? Will they cut frontline staff numbers like they did

under Campbell Newman? All of this is at risk if the opposition will not fully back progressive royalties. This should be something of concern to every Queenslanders. In Ipswich, our local hospital is undergoing one of the biggest expansions in its history, including a plan for 200 additional beds and a new emergency department. All of that will be under threat if the LNP get in at the next election. This would be devastating for Ipswich people who rely on hospital services.

I am so proud to represent the Ipswich electorate, and I believe that Ipswich people deserve the best when it comes to getting good health care. Many people in Ipswich cannot afford to go private and we should not penalise them for that. They deserve a world-class health system. I am proud to say that the Palaszczuk government is delivering this for them. Our record \$25.8 billion investment in this budget includes \$9.8 billion for the hospital construction program. There is \$764 million to address ambulance ramping and emergency department wait times. We have a really large hospital in the CBD. We have a dedicated healthcare workforce who do a fantastic job treating patients under pretty demanding conditions. We recognise that the emergency department is under significant pressure. That is why this year's budget invests heavily in the Ipswich Hospital expansion.

We are the fastest growing LGA in Queensland. Our population is set to grow to 530,000 people by 2046. We have the satellite hospital coming on board and we have the subacute hospital setting up adjacent to that. We have a new ambulance station and a new police station coming on board to manage that growth. None of this could be possible without those coal royalties and without the support of a good Labor government.

I am really excited that in this budget we have some money set aside to match the federal government investment to expand the Springfield to Ipswich train line to work on the business case for that. This is going to be a game changer for all of those people moving to our area.

The Acting Speaker has reviewed and approved my speech on the budget for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated into the *Record of Proceedings*.

The speech read as follows—

The Ripley Satellite Hospital will improve access to urgent care in Queensland's fastest growing suburb and ease some of the burden on Ipswich Hospital's ED.

In this budget we are also investing \$26 million out of a total \$85.4 million spend for a three-storey, 90-bed subacute care facility adjacent to Ripley Satellite Hospital. This will provide rehabilitation, geriatric, palliative and interim care services for patients.

Ripley will also be home to a new ambulance station with \$7.3 million invested in 2023-24 to continue construction on the station. The new ambulance station will help improve ambulance response times across Ipswich.

The Ipswich Hospital expansion, the Ripley Satellite Hospital and the new Ripley ambulance station are all vital to our region and will help accommodate Ipswich's future growth. Our progressive coal royalties are supporting the delivery of this vital healthcare infrastructure, and without the revenue from those royalties, those projects would be at risk. This is why Ipswich people need to know if the opposition supports our coal royalties.

We are also boosting healthcare worker numbers to strengthen healthcare outcomes for Queenslanders.

Since 2015, we have employed an extra 909 nurses in the Ipswich region and an extra 201 doctors.

To boost those numbers, we are investing \$10.6 million in the Incentive Transfer Scheme to attract clinicians from interstate and overseas to relocate to Queensland. We will do this by providing up to \$70,000 for medical practitioners and \$20,000 for health care workers to relocate to Queensland.

Outside of the big cities, hospitals have difficulty attracting and retaining medical practitioners, particularly specialists. The shortage of specialists, for example, leads to long wait times for appointments or people having to travel into Brisbane for specialist appointments and treatment. This is an issue for many people in my electorate and so this incentive scheme is very much welcomed.

Transport

Our progressive coal royalties are working hard to deliver the services and infrastructure Queenslanders need, and that includes transport infrastructure.

Our quality of life is very much affected by our commute times and the ease of getting around our suburbs and cities.

Importantly, good transport connectivity drives our state's economy by improving productivity and growth.

That is why I am very pleased to see in this budget our state committing to the delivery of the Ipswich to Springfield rail line with an investment of \$3.375 million to undertake the formal business case of this crucially important project. This amount matches the Federal Government's \$3.375 million commitment, and is bolstered by the Ipswich City Council's contribution of \$750,000. The total investment delivered is \$7.5 million.

This is great news for people living in the Ripley Valley who currently have very few public transport options available to them.

The Ripley Valley is the fastest growing area in Queensland with it set to grow to 120,000 people by 2046. Investing in rail in this area will mean that we can avoid catastrophic congestion on our local roads over the next two decades.

Education

Ipswich schools are big winners in this year's budget with just over \$29 million invested in our electorate's state high schools and primary schools.

I am pleased to see that Claremont Special School will be getting a total of \$7 million in this financial year to build additional classrooms.

Claremont Special School is one of three special schools in my electorate—a higher than average number for any electorate—and each one of those schools are having to manage rising enrolment numbers.

Every child deserves the best when it comes to their education, and that includes children living with a disability. So I am very pleased to see Claremont getting this funding to build new classrooms which will benefit their students enormously.

Bremer State High School will also see an investment of \$8.78 million to build additional specialist classrooms. The brand, new Ripley Central State School opened just this year will receive \$11 million in this budget to continue building more classrooms and learning facilities.

Bundamba State School and Raceview State School will be sharing in a total of \$1.2 million to refurbish their school buildings, and I am excited to hear that Deebing Heights State School will be getting \$73,000 to build a new playground.

Sport

I am pleased to see good investment in sport and active recreation in this budget. Especially at the local level.

In Ipswich, we have great community sport clubs with many talented players, athletes, coaches, and volunteers. Some of the younger athletes will undoubtedly have their sights set on Brisbane 2032.

That is why I am very pleased to see Ipswich Hockey Association receive \$250,000 in this budget to replace their fields' playing surface.

As the patron for Ipswich Hockey Association, I have strongly supported their application funding through our government's Minor Infrastructure Program.

Given that hockey is hugely popular in Ipswich, I know this funding will be warmly welcomed by everyone.

When I visited Ipswich Hockey Association last week to congratulate them, I had the chance to catch up with a junior girls' hockey team who were training at the time. This funding means young athletes like them will be able to train and play hockey on safe, optimal playing fields.

I must also mention that it is fantastic to see this budget investing in women's sport. Last week, I hosted the inaugural Championing Women in Sport Luncheon in Ipswich featuring an inspiring panel of five local sportswomen who have done so much to promote and inspire women and girls to participate in sport.

Our panel was made up of Dakota Davidson from the Brisbane Lions, rugby league players Bo De La Cruz and Veronica White, power-lifter Hani Watson, and BMX champion Holyee-Ann Jackson. Those women talked about what it took to get to a professional level including all the challenges they faced as women in male-dominated sporting arenas.

Our event had several tables of girls from local high schools who came to listen to the inspiring stories of these amazing sportswomen.

With this budget's investment of \$10 million in the Female Facilities and Inclusive Infrastructure Program, we are giving schoolgirls like them the opportunity to train and play at clubs that provide safe, accessible, and inclusive community sporting infrastructure.

We are also boosting sport participation for kids in low-income households by investing an extra \$4.8 million into the \$150 FairPlay vouchers so they can be used for swimming lessons for children aged four and under.

Expanding this program to swimming is a great way to keep our kids safe in the water, and it is just another one of our fantastic cost-of-living measures that our budget can provide to families because of our progressive coal royalties.

Housing

The cost of housing is a challenge for many families at the moment.

Many of my constituents tell me they are struggling with rising rental prices or struggling with higher mortgage repayments due to rising interest rates.

Housing shortages are contributing to increasing homelessness in Ipswich.

On Census Night in 2021, there were 2,126 people who were counted as homeless in the Ipswich local government area. No doubt, that number has risen since then.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government is pulling every lever possible to ensure everyone has a roof over their heads.

Our government is committed to tackling the housing supply shortage by delivering an additional \$1.1 billion in this budget to bring our total social and affordable housing investment to \$5 billion. This additional investment means we can build 13,500 social homes across the state.

In this year's budget, we have set aside \$322 million to expand the QuickStarts Queensland program to build 500 more social homes.

Our investment in the QuickStarts program means that Churches of Christ can build a 40 units of social housing accommodation in Basin Pocket providing affordable housing for older people in our community.

Quickstarts will invest \$43.7 million to deliver 166 new social homes in Ipswich to be commenced by 30th of June 2025. This will support more than 138 full-time equivalent jobs.

We are putting in place other initiatives to encourage more Build-to-Rent programs, headleasing, and investing in community housing organisations.

\$28 million will be invested in the Immediate Housing Response Package in this budget to provide emergency accommodation for families living in insecure and unsafe conditions and rental support to help people maintain tenancies. This package will help many families in Ipswich who are finding it extremely tough finding a place to live due to soaring rents.

Last week I visited Rosie's Food Van in Ipswich. They are seeing increasing demand for their meals. This particular winter has also been very hard on people sleeping rough. Local Rosies volunteer, Paul Whewell, noticed an increased request for blankets and has started up a blanket drive to make sure homeless people sleeping rough can stay warm this winter.

But nothing beats having a roof over your head. A house provides dignity, safety, security, and warmth against the winter chill, and that's why our government will never give up on our commitment to build more social and affordable housing.

Conclusion

I would like to commend the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer, the Premier, and the Ministers for many of the measures in this budget that are providing relief to Queenslanders at this difficult time such as:

- The \$2.7 million expansion to the School Breakfast Program to ensure young Queenslanders can get a healthy start to their day.
- The record \$3.6 billion budget for the Queensland Police Service which will include \$5 million in this budget to continue work on the new \$25 million Ripley police station. This is in addition to \$102 million to boost police resources and boost intervention programs to combat youth crime.
- The \$315,000 for Foodbank to deliver critical food relief for communities experiencing food insecurity.
- The \$152 million to deliver a suite of initiatives to enhance Queensland's disaster recovery and resilience which will be welcomed in Ipswich given our risk of severe flooding.
- And the \$19 billion in total capital investment over 4 years to support the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan delivering new wind, solar, storage and transmission.

We are able to make these investments because our progressive coal royalties.

The opposition can't say whether they will keep those royalties.

Queenslanders deserve to know because our investment in vital infrastructure and cost-of-living measures are too important to cut.

I commend the 2023-24 budget to the House.