




Speech By
Jonty Bush

MEMBER FOR COOPER

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2023

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

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (10.36 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Appropriation Bill 2023. What a day to be a Queenslander. I know that the State of Origin is usually our day of solidarity and state pride, but this year's budget week has got to be right up there. I certainly do not want to trivialise the importance of this budget, because we know right now right across Queensland—across the country in fact—everyone is feeling the cost-of-living impacts at home. Every time we buy groceries, pay an electricity bill or renew our driver's licence, we have the tangible evidence that it is getting harder to make our income spread across everything we need and want.

This year's state budget is a cost-of-living budget. There is free kindy for all Queenslanders. People in my community are loving this announcement. Not only does it speak to our government's commitment to easing the cost-of-living pressures, but it speaks to the value we place on ensuring all Queensland children can start their learning journey together. There are \$550 rebates on electricity prices for all Queensland homes, with over \$1,000 in electricity rebates for eligible concession card holders. There is over \$8 billion in concessions and rebates, including reduced fees on drivers' licences and subsidising public transport.

However, it is more than that. This is a budget that provides for now in helping our working families, our young people and our seniors in easing some of those daily pressures. It is also a budget for our future—with a heavy focus on investing in infrastructure to manage Queensland's growing demand pressures and the services we need to ensure every Queenslander is cared for.

It is a budget that returns a surplus—the greatest surplus on record across all Australian states and territories. As we have heard, that has been secured because of our firm position on progressive coal royalties—royalties that we know the mining lobby are pushing back against. While people in my electorate have mixed views about coal and the use of that, we all stand united in our position that our resources sector should be major contributors to Queensland's economy through coal royalties. We still have not heard from the opposition today on whether they would retain these coal royalties if they win government or how they would otherwise fund the \$7 billion shortfall.

I want to touch briefly on our local highlights. This year's budget includes \$3.3 million in local school infrastructure. I know that the students, the parents and all of the teaching and school staff at Petrie Terrace State School are going to welcome the news that funding is provided to commence the work on the renewal of the school's entry and walkway corridors. I have spoken with principal Ben Reed, who is doing a fantastic job of coordinating these works.

The students at Ithaca Creek State School are going to love their new outdoor learning areas and multipurpose sports court that have been fully costed and funded in this year's budget—almost half a million dollars of investment there.

The Gap State High School will again receive state government investment this year. I have spoken with principal Anne McLauchlan who is thrilled to know that we are providing over half a million dollars to install their access ramp to the home economics block H. This will ensure that their students who face mobility challenges can pursue their dreams in hospitality now and into the future. While I am speaking about principal Anne McLauchlan, I take the opportunity to congratulate her as she has been short-listed for Principal of the Year in the Australian Education Awards. Well done to Anne.

It gives me great pleasure to speak in here about Payne Road State School. They are a wonderful school community. I have spoken with their principal, Nicky Brazzale, who was over the moon to learn that we have allocated \$1.2 million to completely refurbish and modernise their block A which is long overdue for some work, and I am glad it is getting a complete renovation. We just now need to sort out the senior amenities block and I will be happy.

Before I incorporate my speech, I congratulate the Treasurer and his team and his department and the various departments and the ministers involved in pulling this budget together. Coming up with policies and ideas is one thing, but fully costing them and securing the funding and making those difficult decisions around prioritisation is not an easy task, and it is not a function that every political party actually ever gets tested on, so I commend the Treasurer and his collective team's achievement on that.

I also want to acknowledge a special person in my community, David Williams. David is a proud Wakka Wakka man. For the past 20 years, David has worked as a cultural performer producing great work locally and overseas. He is the Executive Director of Gilimbaa, which means 'today' in the language of the Wakka Wakka. Gilimbaa is a creative agency, specialising in storytelling and connection. David and his team at Gilimbaa are actually responsible for the artwork on this year's Queensland state budget. I have spoken to David who is just so proud of what his team has produced. He is a wonderful human, he is an incredible performer and he does a lot in our local community, so congratulations and thank you to David Williams.

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

The speech read as follows—

I am going to have to show a lot restraint here because there is a lot to talk about and I will certainly be getting out in my community and making sure people are aware of what benefits they stand to gain, but I will concentrate my contribution on some key areas that are of most relevance to my community: cost of living, health and housing and the environment.

Cost of Living

The announcement that so many people in my community are excited for free kindy for all Queensland children. This is not just a direct saving for families at \$4,600 per child, this is about removing any financial barrier for children to start their education as early as they can, and to start that journey together as one cohort. We do not want two cohorts of kids entering prep. We want to make that level playing field and set them up for success from the start. This will deliver on that, and it will make it easier for parents to return to work, if that is their choice or something they need to do.

We have expanded our electricity rebate scheme, widening that net so that all Queenslanders are eligible for a \$550 electricity rebate for the year, which is huge. What excites me about this announcement is not only that all Queenslanders are saving substantially on one of the highest household bills but also that it offers confidence in our transition towards renewable energy. There are people in my electorate who are concerned about the pace at which we are transitioning to renewable energy, I want to offer those people assurance.

Health and Housing

Our government will always prioritise the health needs of Queenslanders, and this year's budget invests a record \$25.8 billion into that. Additional funding to help manage the pressures that paramedics are facing at the moment, including funding for 200 more paramedics, \$28 million for new and replacement ambulances and financial incentives for nursing and midwifery students to undertake their placement in regional locations because we know that once they spend some time in our regions they will find it difficult to leave.

On housing, every jurisdiction across the planet right now is experiencing issues with housing. This is not something unique to Queensland but it is something that we have to prioritise, and I have advocated for additional housing measures and will continue to do that. The composition of Queensland homes has changed. Fewer people are living under one roof now. In 2015, the average Queensland home had 2.6 people in it, today it is 2.5. It might seem insignificant but that one demographic change creates an incredibly high demand for housing in Queensland. Couple that with the supply chain challenges we are facing, anyone trying to build or renovate right now would know it is almost impossible to find a company with capacity to take on new work. I absolutely understand that people are finding it hard to find suitable housing in their area, or to build, or to stay in rentals. There is no one solution to this. It is not just about building additional social housing—although, of course, that is one of the measures I will talk about—it is about supply, it is having more apartments built, it is about communities becoming comfortable with gentle densification, it is about adjusting the rental settings so that renters can feel at home in their rental, and that they have some security of tenure.

An additional \$1.1 billion will be invested in this year's budget into the housing portfolio. This will help pay for those additional construction costs in the industry. It will ensure that the houses we have committed to will be built despite the inflationary pressures. Additionally, it will see an additional 500 social homes built, on top of our current commitments.

Just this week the federal parliament is debating the Housing Australia Future Fund Bill, a bill that will establish a \$10 billion fund to support the construction of new social and affordable homes every year on an ongoing basis. This fund will recommit the federal government to social housing in a big way after 27 years of inaction, and get all levels of government working together on one of our country's biggest challenges again. Importantly, it is set up so that a future conservative government will not be able to axe it. It is not going to solve everything—no one suggests it will—but it will put another 30,000 social and affordable homes into the market within five years and get vulnerable people including domestic violence survivors and veterans into a home, which is why the Community Housing Industry Association, National Shelter, Homelessness Australia and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association have all publicly called on elected members to support it.

We have two Federal Members elected across the Cooper seat, in the seats of Ryan and Brisbane, and I am unimpressed that neither turned up when the vote for this social housing bill occurred in the House of Representatives. Once the fund is set up, there is nothing stopping us from pushing for it to be increased in upcoming budgets. But we need to set the foundation and I am calling on our federal members to get it done.

Environment

Constituents in my electorate regularly congratulate me on our government's Energy and Jobs Plan, and the difference this mapped, planned and funded transition to renewables will make in our contribution towards climate change and emissions reduction. I know they will be excited to hear of our continued commitment to that plan. This year's budget predictably includes another big investment in our environment, including: \$234 million invested for waste and resource recovery—as part of our \$2.1 billion, 10-year plan for a zero-waste Queensland, something to celebrate for our children and grandchildren; \$94.4 million on projects to reduce waste, towards things like circular Economy Initiatives and Statewide Behaviour Change Programs.

Another \$30.6 million to expand our protected area network, an area that is currently twice the size of Tasmania and growing.

\$51.9 million to improve visitor experiences and revitalise infrastructure in our national parks, driving tourism and allowing Queenslanders to enjoy our beautiful natural assets including D'Aguilar Forest which is right on our doorstep.

A combined \$70.5 million to strengthen our ongoing work and partnerships with First Nations Peoples, who we walk alongside to care for our precious protected areas.

\$49.9 million to continue our successful Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program.

This budget sets Queensland up for the future, while recognising the very real pressures and impacts faced by our people today. I commend it to the House.