




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

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

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (4.32 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Appropriation Bill 2023-24. From the outset I will say that revenue has never been higher, but services have never been worse. There is no better example of that than Queensland's scandal-prone electricity network. The budget papers are riddled with spin, strategies for strategies and reannouncements. This shows very clearly that the chaotic and crisis-ridden Palaszczuk government does not deliver on its promises to Queenslanders. It is abundantly clear that Queenslanders can no longer trust this government.

The people of Condamine, whom I proudly represent, are feeling that more than ever. Once again, the people of Condamine have largely missed out on significant funding for road infrastructure, increases in police officers and resources for our local stations, or affordable housing in the communities of the Condamine electorate. The constituents who live in rural and regional communities deserve way better from this Palaszczuk government. The funding announced in this 2023-24 budget for the three high schools in Condamine was announced in the 2020 budget, and has continued to be announced every year since. Still, not one of these school halls has been completed in Pittsworth, Oakey or Clifton. The cost of materials and labour has increased dramatically during that time, adding significantly to the total cost for completing these infrastructure projects. The official opening of each hall is eagerly anticipated by the school communities in these regions. We continue to wait for that day.

At long last, there has been some funding for the construction of the Toowoomba to Warwick pipeline which will supply water to the residents of the communities of Cambooya, Greenmount, Nobby and Clifton. In the 2023-24 budget, \$13.4 million is allocated out of a \$273.1 million total spend. This will ensure a clean drinking water supply for these communities. During the last drought, water was trucked in at considerable expense. This project is way behind schedule. As part of the negotiations between government and council on this project, council secured funding in the budget for a water treatment plant for these communities at a total cost of \$15 million—\$5.2 million in this budget. I assure members that this funding will be welcomed by these communities.

The only road in Condamine to receive any funding is the Gore Highway, albeit somewhat meagre. There is \$1 million from this budget out of a total of \$24.3 million to improve road safety on the Toowoomba to Millmerran and Toowoomba to Athol roads. There is no much needed funding for the New England Highway or for the four lanes to Oakey on the Warrego Highway. Replacement of the Drayton auxiliary fire and rescue station will be funded \$2.4 million in the 2023-24 budget out of a \$7.5 million total spend. We are crying out for more emergency services and officers now—not in 10 years time. The \$16.1 million funding for InterLinkSQ intermodal terminal is welcomed. Anything that can improve the productivity of the transfer of freight is positive news. This will be delivered in partnership with the private sector, which is why it will be delivered.

That is it for the Condamine electorate. There is nothing to boost police numbers to combat the crime crisis that is gripping Condamine, as it is the rest of the state. We have recently seen a business owner in Gowrie Junction spread-eagled across the bonnet of a car during a fuel theft drive-through. We have seen a police car rammed in Meringandan. This is not the streets of New York or Mexico City; these are small country towns in Condamine.

I now turn my attention to my shadow ministerial portfolio of natural resources, mines and energy. This budget was the Premier's opportunity to invest in our power plants and to address the fact that Queensland has the highest rising electricity prices in the country. It was an opportunity for the Premier to restore confidence in the resources industry. However, all this budget shows is that this chaotic and crisis-ridden Palaszczuk government is obsessed with announcements but completely lacking when it comes to delivering on anything that they commit to. There is a lot of gloss and PR spin, but no action to address the fundamental issues across energy and resources.

A prime example of this government's chaos and crisis is the Premier's so-called foundational project, Pioneer-Burdekin pumped hydro, a project that this week has been exposed as nothing more than a great hydro hoax. The 2023-24 budget confirms that there is no funding and no commitment to build this flagship project in the Palaszczuk Labor government's so-called Energy and Jobs Plan. When we look a bit further, the proposed Borumba Dam Pumped Hydro project still does not have a business case or any EIS. It needs state and federal approvals and is still a long way from construction starting.

What is most concerning is that the Premier wants Queenslanders to seriously believe that these projects are virtually shovel ready. That could not be further from the truth. Premier Palaszczuk has form when it comes to energy and hydro. Queenslanders were promised upgrades to the Burdekin Falls Dam six years ago, which included hydro. The Premier's commitment, which at the time included a higher dam wall, was clearly nothing more than a complete con and a PR stunt in the lead-up to the 2017 election. Now we hear the Premier's reannouncement of a higher dam wall, but without the hydro six years later. Does the Premier really believe that Queenslanders are going to fall for this same stunt twice?

The budget also spruiks funding for CopperString; however, there is only \$594 million in this year's budget with \$4.4 billion still unfunded and out in the never-never. What is clear, though, is that the Palaszczuk Labor government cannot be trusted to deliver on any of the promises they make, let alone to build the dams and water infrastructure that is needed for the future of our state.

It is clear the Energy and Jobs Plan was just a PR stunt aimed at winning the next election. This chaotic government has shown that they cannot possibly deliver any of these projects they spruik on time or on budget. Queenslanders are in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis and the ever increasing power costs are only adding to the burden of this. One of the key announcements of this government has been the energy bill subsidies to help consumers pay their electricity bills. This is an admission by the Palaszczuk government that they have lost control of rapidly rising energy prices in this state. The only solution that they have is to spend \$1.48 billion on a one-off subsidy. This will be welcomed by consumers, but it does not address the underlying cause of the skyrocketing price increases. The Labor government has stated over 150 times that power prices will go down—a promise that has consistently proven to be false. The only way the government can achieve this is to hand out a cash splash.

Labor's increased coal royalties have provided the funds to do this, but what happens next year and the year after that? Due to the decline in coal prices, royalties are expected to decrease from \$15.3 billion for 2022-23 to \$5.3 billion in 2023-24. That is a \$10 billion drop, and that is from the government's own figures. Where is the funding going to come from next to pay for this minister's failures? Queenslanders and Minister de Brenni were warned by the Queensland Competition Authority and the Audit Office that the failures of the Callide Power Station would result in a price increase—advice the minister ignored. This budget is not addressing the systemic issues with Queensland electricity prices rising more than anywhere else in the country. Is it any wonder, given the chaotic and crisis-ridden approach the Premier takes to governing?

As I mentioned before, when identifying elements driving up electricity prices a recent QCA report pointed to 'uncertainties associated with the availability and reliability of coal-fired power plants and their impacts on the supply-demand balance in the Queensland region'. The QCA then points to major outages at Kogan Creek and Callide C as examples. This is yet again at odds with the comments made by the Minister for Energy when he said that the explosion at Callide 'would have no net impact on consumers' electricity prices' after generators broke down. This yet again shows that Queenslanders cannot trust anything this minister or government say.

After denying that a lack of maintenance was to blame for the generators failing, the minister was again called out by the MEU for the failings at Callide. As opposition leader David Crisafulli announced this morning, the LNP in government will implement maintenance guarantees on power plants to ensure maintenance is not forgone to prop up the government's balance sheet. This of course will ensure stable supply and address skyrocketing energy prices occurring under the Palaszczuk government's watch.

The ownership structure of Callide C3 and C4 remains in doubt, with no funding in the budget papers to suggest the government is purchasing the remaining share in these generators following the collapse of equity partner Genuity. I note the Treasurer has not used coal royalties to alleviate the doubt and uncertainty about these generators moving forward.

Queenslanders will not forget that the Premier signed up to the federal Labor gas price cap, which has undermined investment confidence into domestic gas in this state. As the transition occurs, it is without doubt that gas will play a part in ensuring a stable electricity supply. It is deeply concerning that the Premier is willing to put political interests with her Labor colleagues ahead of a reliable domestic gas supply for Queenslanders.

The Palaszczuk government has been the beneficiary of a royalties boom that has come off the back of record-high coal prices, so you would expect a significant reinvestment into the very industry that has provided this wealth. When you look through the budget papers you realise that resources and mines barely rate a mention. This once again exposes what little influence the Minister for Resources exerts around the cabinet table. This was an opportunity to provide transport, both road and rail, to fast-track the development of the North West Minerals Province. I note there is some funding for gas exploration in the Bowen and Galilee basins which will be welcomed by industry, since the Premier has put the future development of domestic gas in this state under a cloud. The Palaszczuk government continues to send mixed messages to the resources industry and undermine investor confidence. It is having serious and wide-reaching consequences that will hurt investment opportunity in Queensland for years to come. Is it any wonder, given the chaos and crisis of this government?

Who could possibly forget the debacle that has been Acland stage 3—an approval process that dragged on for 14 years before final approvals were granted? Disappointingly, we see objectors once again, financed by the EDO, going back to court on the very same issue. The resources minister must answer how much the taxpayers of this state are providing to the EDO to continue this legal warfare and these delaying tactics. This is a prime example of Labor's chaos and crisis that undermines critical investment in this state.

We have seen the islands of the Queensland coast fall into disrepair and resorts abandoned under this government's watch. This was only exposed by a committee inquiry called for by the opposition. The government failures are starving what should be huge tourism drawcards of so much potential, and it is concerning that there is no funding or mention in the budget to address the serious issues identified in the committee's report.

There is no funding in the budget for the development of commercial mooring in Brisbane's CBD area. It is inconceivable that we have no commercial river trading opportunities in what is called the river city and in the lead-up to the 2032 Olympics. This goes directly to the chaos and crisis in this government, and I implore the minister to take action to ensure our important river tourism can be shown to the world as we prepare for an influx of tourists over the next 10 years.

I know that morale is low across the departments because of the chaos and crisis of this government. The LNP constantly hears from government whistleblowers with their concerns.

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr WEIR: 1 William Street is leaking like a sieve, I can assure you. The LNP and I are determined to fix it. As the Leader of the Opposition said this morning, a Crisafulli government will empower the Public Service to do what it was hired to do: to proudly serve Queenslanders and the industries it represents. The LNP will reduce the reliance on external consultants and use the savings to deliver Australia's best Public Service that we can all be proud of.

If there is one thing this budget proves it is that Queensland cannot trust the Palaszczuk Labor government to fix the chaos and crisis impacting on their everyday lives. We know that state revenue has never been higher but services have never been worse, and we know that the Palaszczuk government does not deliver on its promises to Queenslanders. This is abundantly clear, both in my electorate of Condamine and to me as the shadow minister for natural resources, mines and energy. This budget does not deliver and it is so clear that Queenslanders can no longer trust this government.