




Speech By  
**Rob Molhoek**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT**

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

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (11.00 pm): I rise tonight to make a brief contribution in the cognate debate on the appropriation bills and speak to the budget. It is a budget that leaves Queenslanders behind. As the representative of the Southport electorate—an area diverse in culture, rich in history and home to a community that radiates resilience and adaptability—I express their concerns tonight about urgent, critical issues that seem to have fallen on deaf ears under the current government. Labor have lost their way. I am going to do something that I never thought I would do in the House. I would like to quote from the state Labor Party's rules because it seems to me that members of the government may have forgotten some of the values that they espouse. I quote section A2, which states—

... the Australian Labor Party stands for:

- a. The use of public power at all times with integrity and honesty—

Interesting concept.

**Mrs Frecklington:** Well how are they going with that?

**Mr MOLHOEK:** I take the interjection from the member for Nanango. I do not think they are going too well with that at all. It continues—

and always in the best interests of the community.

It states further that the Labor Party stands for—

- k. The abolition of poverty, and the achievement of greater equity in the distribution of income, wealth and opportunity.
- l. Social justice and equality for individuals, the family and all social units, and the elimination of exploitation in the home.
- m. Equal access and rights to employment, education, information, technology, housing.

In the midst of a housing crisis, I remind the House that Labor have absolutely lost their way. Obviously many of the members here in the House failed to read their conference papers when that version of the rules was ratified at last year's state convention, but that is not unlike how most of them deal with legislation that comes to the House. They just rubberstamp the bills as they come in. They blindly follow the whims of their masters and the unions. I am not that sure that they review their own values and what they actually stand for all that often.

By contrast, the LNP values the family as an indisputable form where children are raised and nurtured and recognises that they are the foundation of resilient communities and a cohesive society. As a party, we desire to see an Australian nation which is dedicated to political liberty and freedom; the dignity of our citizens and residents; and a nation in which social provision is made for those who are unable to provide for themselves.

We have a budget that is full of excuses. I was quite excited when I heard that there would be a \$12 billion surplus because I thought that maybe Labor would do something to address some of the critical issues in our state—like the housing crisis—instead of squandering the opportunity. I thought that Labor always claimed to be the party for the battlers and the disadvantaged. I thought they always said that they were the party that left no-one behind. I take you back a few years to when the member for Springwood, Minister de Brenni, announced the Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027. They announced \$1.1 billion in funding over five years. They announced it as though it was an incredible commitment. In reality, they were simply reannouncing the average \$200 million or so that they were committed to spending each year on capital works and capital grants across the state of Queensland.

I would have thought, with the sort of surpluses that the Treasurer announced, that if they were serious about addressing the housing crisis in Queensland they might have come out with something like, 'Let's double the availability of the social and affordable housing supply across Queensland by 2032.' That would be an Olympics legacy that some of us could get excited about; that there would be a future for our kids and a future for families, and would deal with the housing crisis. We have had many comments in the House this week that we need real nurses, not real funded positions. I would suggest to the minister that we need real houses, not funded houses.

We need to increase the access to supportive accommodation and community care for people who are struggling with disabilities, PTSD and mental health. We need to come up with better plans. I heard in the House earlier the child safety minister almost with delight announce that it was their biggest ever child safety budget—the first time that the budget has ever exceeded \$2 billion. I would have thought the goal of any government would be to spend less, or hope to spend less on something as sad and as heartbreaking as child safety.

I have not seen anywhere in the budget papers for child safety a plan to transition kids out of residential care into more wholesome and more rewarding living circumstances, like the youth foyers that were first established under Tim Mander's leadership as the housing minister back in 2015-16. I am pleased that the government has followed that lead. The youth foyer in Southport is technically in the electorate of Bonney, but just across the street from the mighty electorate of Southport. It was my pleasure to go there last week to meet with some of the young people who were living there but who have transitioned out of residential and foster care and are living in a supported environment where they are being taught to develop leadership and life skills. They are learning to live independently. They are learning to live in a community of people who support and respect one another. They are being helped to complete their education. Might I add, this is at substantially less cost than residential care.

If I had the opportunity to ask the minister a question, I would like to know what the current cost of residential care is, because at the time of the Carmody inquiry in 2014-15 it was estimated to be something like \$600,000 per child in residential care. I believe that the cost of supporting young people into independent living and support services through the youth foyer is perhaps almost a third or maybe even a fifth of that cost, and the outcomes are far greater. I plead with the government to find the capital and the funds to develop youth foyers in every major population centre of this state because they work, and they are a far better alternative to wasting police and child safety resources by picking up kids and delivering them back to residential care homes that they do not particularly want to be in.

I want to touch on the Gold Coast housing crisis. I have tabled this document before, and I updated it yesterday, but over the last 12 years the state has spent something like \$6.7 billion on housing. That is for the construction of housing and the acquisition of land and capital grants to other housing providers. Over the last 12 years, the Gold Coast has received just 6½ per cent of that total—about \$364 million—but the Gold Coast has 12 per cent of the state's population. If you do the simple maths, without even looking at what realistically should have been spent on housing supply, both affordable and public housing, the Gold Coast should have received something like \$789 million on a proportionate basis. The Gold Coast has been short-changed by about \$360 million. One can only imagine how much housing supply that would have created and how many issues that would have assisted with on the Gold Coast—one of the largest regional centres in our state.

While it might seem that I am labouring the issues around housing, I want to draw the attention of the House to the *Shifting minds* report of the Mental Health Commission—a strategy that contains a message from the current Premier of Queensland and is proudly touted as an important document in shaping the future of Queensland and looking after those with mental health issues and addictions. The very first thing they talk about in that strategy as a driver for change is ensuring there is somewhere safe and affordable for people to live. As you look at many of the other reports across government—*Not now, not ever* and the discussion around providing safe and secure housing for women who are victims of domestic violence and their children—you see that one of the first priorities is the need to provide safe and secure housing.

I do not raise these issues in the House lightly. I have been accused of perhaps being a bit too Labor and not Liberal enough on occasions, but it is certainly in our values to look after the poor and the underprivileged and people who cannot defend themselves. I am just so disappointed that the best the Treasurer and this government could come up with in the budget, with a \$12 billion surplus, is an extra \$70 million or \$80 million on top of the average they have committed to for housing over the last decade. To me, that is not a serious commitment to their values. Every member of the other side of the House should hang their head in shame and should be making a beeline for the minister's office to discuss their values and why they should be lifting their game in respect of looking after people.

There are so many other issues I would like to touch on in respect of the budget. I have touched very briefly on the issue of mental health. I would be interested to know just how much revenue this government has collected from the payroll initiative it introduced last year. I had trouble finding that in the budget. I would certainly like to know if the money that is being collected is being spent as it should.

I also would like to address issues around the health system. The Gold Coast University Hospital and Robina Hospital emergency departments are currently operating at about twice their built capacity. That says to me that there simply has been an incredible lack of forward planning. While satellite hospitals or whatever you want to call them have been announced and while there has been discussion around a new hospital in Coomera, the need is there right now. One of the excuses we hear from this government constantly is that there is unprecedented growth and unprecedented demand that we just never expected to happen because of COVID. I have been criticised on this point previously, so I thought I would check the Queensland Treasury's population forecast figures. They are provided to government by Treasury, and they are promoted on the department of state development's website as the guide for all councils and government authorities in their planning. It might surprise members to know that at the median level of growth the population of Queensland as of this year is expected to be 5.4 million. It is currently 5.319 million, so the population is a good 80,000 fewer than the current projection of Treasury. The excuse that we have unexpected population growth or unprecedented demand simply does not wash.

We need the Treasurer and the government to do a better job at planning. We need real police, not funded police. The Southport Police Station, one of the busiest police stations in the state, a few years ago had 144 people assigned. More recently I have been told the allocated number is 89. Then I was told it is 78. We know from whistleblower reports and from having seen some rosters that there are times that station is operating at less than half its allocated staff. That is simply not good enough.

In respect of our local schools I simply say that I am thankful for the \$3 million that has been allocated to Keebra Park, but there are 18 schools in my electorate and I think they deserve more.