




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

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

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (10.41 pm): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise here tonight to respond to the Palaszczuk government's 2023-24 budget. Talk about a wasted opportunity. The Treasurer has pocketed an extra \$60 billion than he forecast in his first budget, but there is absolutely little to show for it. It is indeed a squandered opportunity. I have previously commented that throwing ever increasing 'record budget' amounts of money into key areas such as transport and main roads, health and education is not in itself a real measure of success. Every minister spruiks about this year being a record budget. So what is new? Every year they spruik about a record budget spend. Labor seems to simplistically equate that success is defined by how much money you throw at an area of public policy rather than what it delivers for Queenslanders. Simply put, it is what you do with resources rather than just throwing borrowed money continually at an issue. Given our total state debt will now blow out to \$147 billion by the end of the forward estimates, this is indeed a budget which again continues to fail future generations.

I will now comment on the budget in my capacity as the shadow minister for customer service and shadow minister for transport and main roads. As I reiterate in most budget reply speeches, the *raison d'être* of the main roads and transport portfolio is all about delivering an efficient and responsive statewide transport system that will connect people right across our vast state, both now and into the future. Yet again, Labor's incompetent approach to the 2023-24 budget, particularly for this key portfolio, means, as I said last year and the year before, that this worthy goal is still a long way off. Is it any wonder under the watch of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads that we have, as I always say, the hashtags #budgetblowouts and #railfail?

The Minister for Transport and Main Roads wants to talk up the transport and main roads budget and tell us, as he always does, with his favourite word from high school drama days, that it is 'awesome'. Like previous years, in effect it is more a smoke-and-mirrors exercise—

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find the comments made by the member for Chatsworth in relation to high school are inaccurate and wrong and he ought to withdraw them. I find them personally offensive. I never did drama in high school.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lister): Minister, you have been here long enough to know that a point of order is only concerned with whether or not you are offended. It is not an opportunity to prosecute the argument.

Mr BAILEY: I am personally offended by the inaccuracy of the comments and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Please take your seat, Minister. Member for Chatsworth—

Mr MINNIKIN: I withdraw. It is in effect a smoke-and-mirrors exercise, member for Miller, rather than a credible financial document for the future. So—

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is an experienced member. He is addressing me directly across the chamber and not speaking through the chair, as he should under the standing orders.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Yes, you are correct. Member for Chatsworth, you will direct your comments through the chair.

Mr MINNIKIN: Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker. Let's have a look at Labor's record. The minister will again talk about a record QTRIP, but like last year, the year before and the year before, really it is about recycling old announcements—old documents run through the photocopier, this time with a better colour toner. It is the same old announcement. It was strange that his announcements did not include—and I found this incredible—anything on railroad level crossings. This is the genius statement.

Let's follow the logic here: Cross River Rail is going to produce more trains running more regularly. Big tick—great! Fantastic! What is it going to mean at either end of the Cross River Rail north and south bound routes when it comes to open level crossings? They will be down longer, as I proved by going out there last week. I actually timed how long I was stuck at open level crossings. It is getting more and more ridiculous. Of course, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads is more fixated on active transport than he is on open level crossings. It is an absolute amazement to me. It was strange the announcement did not include any open railway level crossings in major capital works. There is the token little amounts that appear, and I will speak a bit more about that.

What really is Labor's track record? It is one, as we absolutely know, of project delays and cost blowouts. Of course, as usual, the starting point is the Palaszczuk Labor government's signature infrastructure project, Cross River Rail. Minister Bailey used to perpetuate the myth that the project will only cost the taxpayer initially \$5.4 billion.

An opposition member: \$5.9 billion.

Mr MINNIKIN: I will take the interjection. We know that there are extra project costs being hidden in other parts of the budget—it is all here in QTRIP—and that is before the \$960 million blowout he admitted to on media weeks ago. I challenge, through the chair, yet again the Minister for Transport and Main Roads to dispute this figure by providing the extra cost breakdown areas of the budget which are inextricably part of the overall Cross River Rail project. For example, add in the realignment of the Breakfast Creek track—\$55.28 million—and construction of the stabling yard at Clapham Yard Stabling at Moorooka—\$532 million; last year it was \$301 million. I guess that is the pesky Russians at work. Fairfield train station to Salisbury train station upgrades, various locations—\$105.3 million; last year it was \$52.5 million. Another blowout: relocation of the Mayne Yard facility—\$33.7 million; last year, \$22.4 million. It all adds up, paid for by the taxpayer of Queensland. To upgrade the vehicle and pedestrian access at Mayne Yard—\$152.7 million; last year it was \$96.8 million. To upgrade the power supply at Moolabin Power—\$18 million. Congratulations, Minister for Transport and Main Roads; that stayed the same as last year. The actual cost of Cross River Rail is likely to be around the \$9.37 billion mark, and stay tuned. It goes up every single year.

The actual completion date for the project was raised at estimates last year, and we know the project is well over a year late compared to the glossy brochure that the former Labor member for South Brisbane first announced years ago. As I previously stated, Labor had been caught trying to rewrite history to cover up a project delay. I know the minister likes to wax lyrical about things being 'awesome' but maybe he should concentrate on actually getting some things done.

But wait, we have more. Boundary Road rail crossing was in last year's budget at \$206 million, but now it has increased to \$352.5 million. Townsville Ring Road stage 5 was \$230 million but is now \$280 million. The Banyo train station upgrades have increased from \$28 million to \$54 million. It is just unbelievable. Every single project that this minister is in charge of does not just go up by inflation but in many cases it is three times the cost; it is incredible.

Other examples include the not yet finished Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 3, which started at \$709 million—let's call it \$710 million. Then the project costs went to \$1.04 billion—kerching—but guess what? Wait for it—play along with me, Minister for Transport and Main Roads. As he well knows, it is now at \$1.219 billion. To be fair, that is only a 72 per cent cost blowout; that is all, 72 per cent: kerching! We all know the Coomera Connector went from six lanes to four lanes, but the project has increased in cost from \$1.53 billion to—wait for it—\$2.163 billion. So you pay more money for less road; that is Labor economics and project management for you.

I cannot make a contribution in this budget reply without commenting on the latest and greatest failure under the watch of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. He is the gift that keeps on giving! I specifically refer to the new Gold Coast train stations. Follow this logic: the original cost for three stations—Pimpama, Hope Island and Merrimac—was \$120 million. Are there any guesses as to what that may have gone up to? Play along with me, Minister for Transport and Main Roads.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr MINNIKIN: I hear \$200 million. I will go an increase on \$200 million. One more guess?

Mr Stevens: Was it \$340 million?

Mr MINNIKIN: No, not \$450 million, but \$500 million. We have a winner, winner, chicken dinner—\$500 million, again on the transport minister's watch. It is just absolutely hopeless.

Let's move on from the Gold Coast to the other signature project. For a start, we know that the Bruce Highway Trust started off with much fanfare. They actually took forever to have a meeting and there have been very few at that. Then, of course, the genius Minister for Transport and Main Roads initially forgot to actually put people north of—

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. There is no reference in the budget for this financial year that we are debating to the Bruce Highway Trust. I ask him to come back to the budget.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lister): Minister, a succession of speakers in this chair have afforded wide latitude, as is customary with budget bills. While I am in the chair, we will proceed on that basis.

Mr MINNIKIN: I will continue on the Bruce Highway because that was another failure under the watch of the transport and main roads minister. Let's talk specifically about the latest and greatest iteration. That was the much heralded inland freight route, a very important piece of kit. The creation of the inland freight route was a key—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members. I do not presume that the member for Chatsworth needs assistance—the interjections seem to bounce off—but I am struggling to hear him. Would members please restrain themselves?

Mr MINNIKIN: Only \$4 million of the \$1 billion budget has been spent to date but almost—wait for it; this is the rub—\$800 million will not be spent until after 2026-27. When the government committed to the project last election they did not tell the people it would only be delivered after the next election or even the one after that. It is just too incredible for words.

I would like to make a comment on the Brisbane North tunnel. I absolutely missed the fact that we used to have 20 minutes and now have only 15, but I will continue. After all these failures—I could keep going here for two days—Labor expect us to believe that they have the capabilities to deliver a multibillion dollar tunnel project on time and on budget, or is this project being run by QIC instead of TMR because the Treasurer from the right faction has no confidence that Minister Bailey from the left faction can deliver anything on time and on budget? I cannot believe I am stating this, but on this point I actually agree with the former member for Greenslopes—that is right, he jumped seats and is now the member for Woodridge. Yes, it is true that he struggles with the notion of discount rates in order to capitalise income streams, but he is right to doubt the member for Miller's ability, the transport and main roads minister's ability, to deliver anything on time and on budget. It almost becomes synonymous; when anyone on this side of the chamber or, for that matter, civil contractors mentions the words 'Minister Mark Bailey, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads'—

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is a very experienced parliamentarian. He is referring to me by my personal name, not by my title. He is deliberately ignoring standing orders. I ask that he be brought back to standing orders.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Allow me to take some advice please. I did not hear the references myself, but I understand that the reference was 'Minister Mark Bailey'. I ask members to be conscious of the fact that we must use correct titles. On that basis would you please continue, member for Chatsworth.

Mr MINNIKIN: I wish to finish my contribution with something which is actually very sad and serious. The number of fatalities on Queensland roads is currently four above the five-year average. Revenue from the Camera Detected Offence Program is expected to be over half a billion dollars going forward. There is something that is not in this budget and I cannot believe it, and that is funding for the Driver Reviver centres. It is just absolutely incredulous that despite the money that is absolutely flowing in—and I have always said I support any measures to detect people being fools or being foolish on their mobile phones, I absolutely support that. Sadly, that means there are rivers of gold coming in from that program. However, given the fact that the excuse for shutting down Driver Reviver centres throughout the 33,000 kilometres of state controlled roads was a cost of \$1 million—to me that is a lot of money. However, in a multibillion dollar budget and a line program where the government is picking up \$500 million, it is absolutely incredulous that it cannot find \$1 million to maintain and bring up to speed Driver Reviver centres. I cannot for the life of me understand why this amount of money cannot be found.

This is just one of the worst decisions that the Minister for Transport and Main Roads has ever made. His lack of project management nous and experience and deliverables is absolutely shocking, but this is a decision that I hope he will find within his heart to reverse. If the transport and main roads minister was able to rectify that, I would be the first to congratulate him.