




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2023

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

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (5.06 pm): It is a pleasure to rise to make a contribution to this budget. I would like to congratulate the Treasurer and his department on delivering another record budget. It is a budget that will have a significant, positive impact on the lives of Queenslanders. This is when Queenslanders need it the most: in a cycle of rising interest rates and high inflation. This budget tackles what is an issue facing every Queenslander and, in fact, every Australian across the country—cost-of-living pressures—and it does it in a nation leading way. I will talk in more detail about what that actually looks like.

I would like to touch on what is so important for my electorate, and I know everybody's electorate in this House: the cost-of-living support that this budget delivers. It is just so incredibly heartwarming to see a budget that puts vulnerable people at the heart of what we do. That is what Labor governments do. The budget delivers a \$550 cost-of-living rebate on electricity bills for all Queensland households; and a \$700 cost-of-living rebate for vulnerable households, in addition to, of course, the \$372 under the Queensland Electricity Rebate Scheme, bringing the total of rebates to this group to \$1,072. We should not underestimate what that is going to mean for the most vulnerable in our community. This is about decisions as to whether they have good food on the table as well as pay the electricity bills. Sadly, we all know people in our community who make these really tough decisions about having enough meals during the day and whether they keep the electricity on and pay the water bills and all of those challenges that they do have. This will go a long way. We are supporting small business with the electricity rebate as well.

We are preparing our young kids for prep by giving every single four-year-old 15 hours of free kindy, which is incredible. It is not about the dollars, it is about the people. It is about the difference this will make for those kids and preparing them for the future. The support for the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme is so important. We know that costs have increased significantly as far as accommodation and travel to get health care. This is widely needed, called for and supported.

Learning to swim is about saving lives; making sure that our little ones know how to look after themselves in the water. Sadly we still hear of young kids—and adults for that matter—dying. If we can teach them how to swim when they are young they will have those skills for the rest of their lives.

We are expanding the school breakfast program. This is so important. Our teachers tell us that when kids have no food in their belly they cannot concentrate and they cannot learn. The budget contains support for FoodBank to deliver critical food relief and among the important initiatives is support for our PCYCs.

I acknowledge our contribution towards health and investment not just in infrastructure, which is the most significant we have ever seen in the state, but also in our staff. I will need those staff when the 204 extra beds are available at the Redcliffe Hospital following its expansion, to be completed by 2028. I welcome that investment to attract more students, doctors, nurses and allied healthcare workers.

In the short time that I will speak I want to briefly contrast this with the opposition's response to the budget. I am disappointed that so many misleading comments were made in relation to my portfolio areas and I will have a lot more to say about this. Comments were made about the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council, that its membership 'is comprised of people from the legal fraternity, academia, a prison advocate and even an artist, but not one dedicated victim of crime'. That artist is Boneta-Marie Mabo, the granddaughter of Eddie Mabo. She is a visual artist and youth program manager at Sisters Inside where she leads Indigenous art programs.

Mr Dick: 'Just an artist'.

Mrs D'ATH: She is 'just an artist' sitting on the Sentencing Advisory Council. They talked about victims but failed to mention Warren Strange, the chief executive officer of knowmore, which is a national community legal centre that assists victims and survivors of child abuse with their redress and justice options. He is doing an incredible job.

We heard about DV and our announcements around high-risk DV teams. We were told that Mount Isa was still waiting for a high-risk team. The problem is that Mount Isa was one of the original trial locations for a high-risk team and that team is still operating. We also have high-risk teams operating in Cairns, Mackay, Caboolture, Brisbane, Ipswich, Logan, Beenleigh and Cherbourg. The Townsville team is due to commence in July. Those are just two examples of the misleading statements made.

I note the comment that if they were in government they would get the Auditor-General to do a full review of government diversionary programs for young offenders. Maybe they should get the Auditor-General—ask him right now—to look at the impact when you scrap those diversionary programs, which is what they did when they were in government. We will pray for the Public Service if ever the LNP get back into government. When they say, 'We will have the best public service', I suspect they mean they will have the leanest and smallest public service they can have, which will again mean job losses. I do not want to focus any more on those opposite. They are not in government and that is a good thing for Queenslanders because I believe that they would be destructive and their history tells us that.

We have a great budget. The Treasurer has delivered another budget that delivers for the people of Queensland. It is one that we should all be very proud of.

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

The speech read as follows—

From health to housing to energy and jobs—this Palaszczuk Government Budget sees record spending as part of Queensland's "big build".

An \$89-billion investment in bricks and mortar over the next four years, and half of that it being delivered in regional Queensland.

It is a budget that includes energy storage and upgrades to power delivery, new hospitals and hospital expansion plus social housing and mass transport projects like Cross River Rail and Bruce Highway upgrades.

On top of that the Palaszczuk Government is delivering \$8.2 billion in cost of living concessions.

There is \$1.483 billion in electricity rebates for all Queensland households and eligible small businesses.

- \$550 for every household
- \$700 for vulnerable households, which is on top of the existing \$372 offered under the Queensland Electricity Rebate Scheme, taking the total of rebates to \$1,072.
- And \$650 for around 205,000 small businesses.

This is the most significant electricity rebate support package ever announced by a state or territory and will make a huge difference to the lives of many of my Redcliffe constituents.

The budget delivers 15 hours per week of free kindy for all 4-year-olds from next year, improving the educational outcomes for Queensland children.

It also provides relief for Queenslanders experiencing hardship, by ensuring children are starting their day on the right note by expanding the School breakfast program.

A healthy and nutritious breakfast leads to better concentration and educational outcomes.

Just a few measures to keep more money in Queenslanders' pockets and importantly improve the lives of young people.

So why is Queensland's approach nation leading? Because we own our assets and because Queensland made the brave decision to initiate progressive coal royalties, which means all Queenslanders benefit, no matter where they live.

It also means, we can deliver a \$12.3 billion dollar surplus.

No other state or territory has achieved this.

Not ever.

The big question for the opposition is 'do they support our progressive coal royalties'?

On this side of the House, we know you can invest more when you generate new revenue.

That's what this budget has achieved and that's what Labor government's deliver on.

It takes no skill to cut spending.

It's too easy to sell off assets for that one-time sugar hit of revenue, and cut funding to infrastructure projects and community organisations.

And it's unimaginative to sack public sector workers to save money.

That's how those opposite think.

In fact, those opposite sacked over 14,000 Queenslanders including our nurses, teachers and police when they were last in office.

To put that in perspective—the Queenslanders the LNP sacked could fill my local Redcliffe Dolphin's Kayo Stadium nearly one and a half times.

So, when the Leader of the Opposition spoke about improving the public sector in Queensland, my fear is that means making it leaner and cheaper—less public servants.

While the rising cost of living is an issue at the forefront of many people's minds, Queenslanders also have an expectation that they will have access to justice in their hour of need.

That's why we are investing \$34 million over four years to address the increased demand in the criminal justice system—especially the district court.

To ensure the concept of justice delivers on its promise, the Palaszczuk Government is investing in services.

This will support financially disadvantaged or vulnerable Queenslanders to ensure they have access to justice.

This could mean helping represent people in court.

It could be explaining their rights or legal responsibilities.

Or it could be advocating for and protecting disadvantaged people.

This is where Legal Aid comes in.

I'm proud that the Palaszczuk Government continues to increase funding to Legal Aid by \$17 million over four years and \$4.4 million ongoing.

It will also receive an additional \$18.6 million over four years to support additional legal representation so that witnesses are cross-examined by a trained lawyer rather than the defendant.

Legal Aid is a service that genuinely helps and changes people's lives.

In 2021-22 it helped deliver:

- more than 223,000 information and referral services
- more than 110,000 free duty lawyer services
- nearly 41,000 legal advice and legal task services
- and more than 31,000 approved aid grants.

We also continue to support our community legal centres with ongoing funding.

We are significantly increasing funding for the Coroners Court of Queensland to the tune of \$18.9 million over four years and \$5.8 million ongoing to support sustainable resourcing of the Court.

The Palaszczuk Government is also providing increased funding of \$672,000 over two years to support the Queensland Coronial Legal Service's legal assistance to bereaved families involved in coronial processes.

There is \$13.4 million over four years and \$1.2 million per annum for the Queensland Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal (QCAT) to address wait times and backlogs, and to deliver an efficient and sustainable civil system for everyday Queenslanders.

In addition to this, the 2023/24 Budget provides substantial funding to support victims of violent crime and vulnerable people attending court.

Increased funding of \$9 million has been allocated over four years to support victims of violent crime.

This includes those impacted by domestic and family violence and to better meet the needs of property crime victims where violence, or a threat of violence, has occurred.

Other measures in the Budget to address greater demands on the system include:

- \$32.4 million over five years and \$6.4 million per annum ongoing to deliver responses to the Commission of Inquiry into the Crime and Corruption Commission recommendations and other reforms.
- An additional \$3.8 million over five years to the Director of Public Prosecutions to assess witness statements and manage cases.

- Increased funding of \$3.1 million over two years to deliver timely adult restorative justice conferencing.
- \$4.5 million over two years to continue the specialist high risk youth court established in 2017 as part of the Townsville Community Youth Response.
- \$8.9 million over three years to deliver a fast-track sentencing pilot in four locations, Cairns, Townsville, Brisbane and Southport, for 18 months.
- \$3.5 million over three years to support the implementation of community titles legislation reform in an environment of continued significant sector growth and increasing dispute resolution pressure.

One area this Budget targets that is a scourge of society in general, is domestic, family and sexual violence.

Too many people—the vast majority women and children, are impacted by this.

We must continue to drive change in society to stop this harm.

That's why we are delivering significant increases to support services for victim-survivors and their families to make sure perpetrators are held to account and given support themselves to learn strategies to stop using violence.

\$58.3 million has been allocated over four years and \$20.7 million per annum ongoing to address demand for and gaps in domestic, family and sexual violence service provision.

The funding places victim-survivors at the centre of how we respond to sexual violence.

It includes the expansion of the Sexual Assault Response Team to two new locations and court upgrades in 81 locations to make it easier for victim-survivors to give evidence in court.

There's continued funding worth \$49.1 million to complete capital upgrades to Mackay, Ipswich, Cairns, Caboolture, Maroochydore, Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Brisbane courthouses.

This includes new Domestic and Family Violence courtrooms and safe rooms, reconfigured registry counters, public waiting areas and interview rooms, improved stakeholder facilities, public amenities and security infrastructure, to maximise victim safety.

Construction is on track to commence at four of the eight sites, Toowoomba, Ipswich, Cairns and Caboolture in 2023–24, and at the remaining four sites by late 2024.

This is on top of the five-year \$225 million funding package to implement recommendations of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce Report Two, that will focus on women's and children's experiences across the criminal justice system.

In particular, the funding package includes additional funding of \$12.6 million over five years and \$2.6 million per annum ongoing to provide support for victim-survivors through their criminal justice journey.

It will also be topped up by \$3.6 million plus nearly \$600,000 on going which will help enable:

- A state-wide victim advocate service pilot
- A five-year sexual violence service system strategic investment plan
- Implementation of a victim-centric, trauma-informed service model for responding to sexual violence
- safe pathways for victim-survivors of sexual violence across the criminal justice systems
- establishment of a victim's commissioner
- consideration of the establishment of an independent sexual violence case review board
- and a review of policies, guidelines and court models to ensure the needs of women and girls are met.

Acting Speaker, I'm also pleased to report that when it comes to specific projects in my electorate of Redcliffe—this budget delivers.

These projects range from education and health to funding community organisation and conservation efforts.

Among the projects receiving funding—

\$21 million this year out of \$28.2 million to construct addition classrooms and undertake school renewal at the Woody Point Special School.

Our special schools, like Woody Point, ensure our students have access to the quality education, resources, facilities, and educators that understand their diverse abilities and needs.

We're also investing in upgrades in schools across my electorate to enhance our children's schooling experience.

This includes:

Redcliffe State High School—which receives \$900,000 to refurbish D-Block.

- \$450,000 out of \$800,000 is being spent to modify walkways and equitable access at Clontarf Beach State High School.
- Scarborough State School receives \$250,000 to refurbish Block F.
- Humpybong State School gets \$134,000 to refurbish a multi-purpose sports court.
- Plus \$293,000 is being set aside for minor maintenance in eight local schools in 2023/24.

- This budget also sees \$14.8 million being provided for Redcliffe Hospital out of \$1.175 billion commitment which includes:
- 204 extra hospital beds
- A new clinical services building
- Ambulatory care services building
- A multi-storey carpark
- And refurbishment of the existing hospital services.

This ensures our health system continues to keep up with our growing population, providing more services closer to home.

We also recognise that access to housing is an issue that is felt right across Queensland, including in my electorate of Redcliffe.

This budget continues to help my most vulnerable constituents.

That's why the Moreton Bay Housing and Homelessness Services Hub is receiving \$1 million out of \$3 million for the demolition and redevelopment of the existing Old Pensioners Hall facility into a combined services centre to support homelessness.

This is also the home of the Breakfast Club, a group of volunteers who provide meals and outreach services for homeless people in the electorate.

There's \$10.6 million out of \$22 million towards construction of the Anzac Avenue (Elizabeth Avenue) active transport overpass at Clontarf.

This will provide the highest level of protection for pedestrians, especially local students who would otherwise have to cross a busy, high speed, four lane traffic corridor.

This project will also see more than 250 trees planted and special fauna fencing installed to improve koala habitat in the Hays Inlet area.

And speaking of koalas—in the south east corner, this budget is delivering \$17.3 million in conservation funding to save our koalas.

We're also investing in our Kippa-Ring Aged Care facility. Cooina House is receiving \$539,400 out of \$2.1 million to replace heating, ventilation, air conditioning and nurse call systems.

And there's \$75,000 out of \$150,000 for Tangalooma Island Resort to construct a new drainage and pump system across the resort to reduce flooding on infrastructure and facilities.

Acting Speaker, there is so much more, including \$56 million funding to build PCYCs in additional locations and drive early intervention youth initiatives.

This budget is tackling cost of living pressures, investing in health, housing, education, renewable energy and jobs.

And it's all possible because of our progressive coal royalties.

This budget is for all Queenslanders.