




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 13 June 2024

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; STATE FINANCIAL INSTRUCTIONS AND METWAY MERGER AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (11.08 pm): Before I begin my contribution and as the budget's appropriation bills are being debated in cognate with the State Financial Institutions and Metway Merger Amendment Bill 2024, out of an abundance of caution I declare that I hold shares in Suncorp. I am disappointed to follow the member for Lytton. I would have thought if this was such a great budget she could have spoken for a lot longer. I would have liked to have heard a greater contribution from the member for Lytton, but I was disappointed that it was so short. It was very disappointing to hear that.

Ms Pease interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Order! Member for Lytton, I do not think your interjections are being taken.

Ms LEAHY: This is a budget for four months. It lacks the longer term structural reform that is needed to drive down the cost of living over the next four years and beyond. I want to say at the outset that the LNP will not stand in the way of cost-of-living relief because we know that Queenslanders are paying out of their hip pockets because of all of Labor's additional taxes and increased fees. At the same time as paying for Labor's taxes, Queenslanders are experiencing increases in fuel, electricity, rent, food and insurance—if they can find an insurer to cover them.

What the budget has exposed is that Labor does not have the right priorities for Queensland's future. In fact, it is more of the same from a decade-old Labor government that has delivered Queenslanders a health crisis, a crime crisis, a housing crisis and a cost-of-living crisis. It has never been clearer that this government cares more about their political future than Queenslanders' futures. Never before has a Queensland government taxed more, borrowed more, spent more and had less to show for it. One thing that is for sure is that in the last 10 years of Labor governments they have spending other people's money in their DNA. Despite the revenue rivers of gold, Labor has delivered record debt and record taxes. We also have record numbers of Queenslanders sleeping in tents, record numbers of victims of crime, record ambulance ramping and record numbers of Queenslanders struggling just to make ends meet. Only the LNP has the right priorities for Queensland's future, including saving you from Labor's many failures.

Speaking of record debt, in the last 10 budgets Labor governments have added \$100 billion worth of debt. The total debt was \$72 billion when Labor was elected. Debt will be \$172 billion by the end of the forwards. The interest cost will be over \$21 million per day at the end of the forwards—\$21 million per day of interest. We should stop and think about what cannot be done because the interest bill has to be paid: \$21 million per day is 20 kilometres of road per day that cannot be sealed with bitumen because this money needs to be used to pay the interest bill on Labor's debt. That is some 7,300 kilometres of road per year that will not be sealed because the interest bill has to be paid.

It is not just the LNP saying this about the Labor budget. In her article, Judith Sloan summed it when she said—

Queensland Treasurer Cameron Dick seems to be a bit confused these days. Rather than deliver a responsible budget for his state that uses the fortuitous flow of coal royalties to pay down debt, he thinks he has taken a job at the Ekka stuffing vote-grabbing show bags.

The Local Government Association of Queensland, in its reaction to the budget, said that the budget is not so sweet for councils delivering community livability. Local governments are disappointed by this Labor budget. It is not so sweet for Queensland councils, whose needs are being lost in a superdepartment. Last year in his speech the Treasurer could not bring himself to mention local government. This year we heard his dislike of local government again. In the Treasurer's budget speech he proceeded to set up councils to take the blame for the cost pressures they are facing. This is not the time to forget councils. They are key to unlocking housing supply across the state.

When it comes to Works for Queensland, we still do not have permanent funding. The current funding is slated to end at 30 June 2027, with no ongoing funding locked in for councils. This is despite the permanent funding of this program being the No. 1 advocacy item of local governments. This budget does not deliver that funding certainty for local government. If only the Labor government had not wasted \$230 million on that quarantine camp at Wellcamp they would have the funds to put towards the Works for Queensland program.

One of the disaster mitigation projects that the LNP keeps a watching brief on is the Bundaberg flood levee. We know last year's budget found that the Bundaberg levee had a massive cost blowout. The Bundaberg flood levee was promised by Labor to be delivered by June 2024. As of June 2024, only 2.2 per cent of the money has been spent. It is certainly not on time and it is not on budget. Over the last 10 years Labor has failed to build the levee bank. Clearly flood mitigation is not a priority for Labor governments. In the meantime, Queenslanders' insurance premiums continue to rise—up to 18.5 per cent in the last year alone.

Another important funding program for the safety of all who drive on our state's roads and for local government is the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme. In real terms, this program is struggling to keep pace with the escalating construction costs. While there was a small increase in TIDS funding last year and it has been retained in this budget, it is still well short of the funding that councils need for road construction projects. Once again this budget falls short for local governments' needs.

Despite the 64 per cent of Queenslanders who volunteered last year, there is nothing new in this Labor budget for volunteers. The value of volunteering to the Queensland community is some \$117 billion, yet this budget does not recognise the contribution to the state's economy. The LNP value volunteers and we will help them break down the barriers to volunteering.

I see that in this budget there is a line item allocation of funding for a cross-border commissioner. Councils along the border have been calling for a cross-border commissioner for years. Apparently the Labor government has had an FTE for a cross-border commissioner but no-one could find them and no council ever saw them. I am pleased to see that Labor has now copied the LNP's policy initiative. That was a policy initiative that the LNP announced in 2017 and in 2020. It is amazing what the Labor government can do when an election is just four months away.

I commend the opposition leader, David Crisafulli, and the shadow Treasurer, David Janetzki, on their budget reply speeches. They have pointed to the positive policies of the LNP. The LNP has a plan to secure our housing foundations. This will focus on increasing housing supply across the state, something that is needed in many communities and also the communities in my electorate. The Cabinet Housing Taskforce will have local government at the table and will help them with the trunk infrastructure funding that they have been fighting for. The LNP will forge a partnership with local government on planning and regional infrastructure planning, which is so important for livability. The LNP will empower the community housing sector and unlock faith-based and charity surplus land. The LNP will completely abolish stamp duty for first home buyers who are buying and building a new home. We will also enable first home buyers to rent out a room to help them make their home ownership dream a reality. The LNP will put family and small businesses first with our policies on tenders, procurement and quicker payments.

I will now turn to some of the issues in my electorate. In my electorate, roads are important for the transport of agricultural produce and resources to market and also the return of goods to the region's residents and tourists. Groceries in the regions will cost more now because this Labor government has cut the regional freight subsidy to Barcaldine, Cloncurry, Dirranbandi, Hughenden, Julia Creek, Longreach, Mount Isa, Roma, Winton, Dalby and Tara this year. I am advised that Dalby's freight costs have increased from an average of \$60 per pallet to \$180 per pallet. This follows Labor's subsidy cut in 2021 to the communities of Surat, Wandoan, Taroom, Theodore, Moura and Biloela. These increases

in freight cannot be absorbed by the family businesses who run these food stores, meaning that groceries and perishable lines will cost more in these communities. This Labor government is the cause of cost-of-living increases in these communities.

When it comes to roads, this budget is a failure. It does not address the need to replace the Eulo Bridge. It does not restore the funding cut to the Adavale Back Road following federal Labor's 90-day review. It does not fund the Landsborough Highway and Main Street intersection. It does not fund the passing lanes on the Warrego Highway west of Miles. It does not improve the safety of the Surat Development Road and the intersection with the Leichhardt Highway. It does not fund the upgrade of the Cunningham Street rail crossing in Dalby. It does not improve the flood immunity of the Loudon Bridge. It does not widen the Roma-Condamine, the Mitchell-St George, the Jackson-Wandoan, the Meandarra-Talwood, the Charleville-Quilpie or the Tara-Kogan roads. My constituents have every reason to be disappointed with this Labor budget because they know that there are bike tracks in Brisbane that are wider than many of those roads.

Mr Head: It's disgraceful.

Ms LEAHY: I take that interjection from the member for Callide; it is disgraceful. In Tara, constituents of mine are facing another cold winter without a permanent home and they are disappointed in this budget. The Labor government has reportedly spent \$390,000 per bedroom purchasing the Park Hotel at Spring Hill yet they quibble about providing Tara bushfire victims with \$50,000 to restore their homes. Nine of my constituents who lost their homes in February 2023 are still waiting to move into their new premises. If you are a vulnerable homeless person in Brisbane then the Labor government is prepared to spend up, but in Tara if you have lost your home in a bushfire then you are expected to wait 18 months and will receive only 12 per cent of what those in Brisbane receive.

Despite all the talk about this being a record budget for health, it does nothing to improve the number of doctors in my electorate, including in the health facilities. In the past 12 months, the Augathella Multipurpose Health Service has been without a doctor for 41 days. For more than a month there has been no doctor on site. It is a similar story in Mitchell where for 28 days there has been no doctor at the multipurpose facility. In Quilpie, for 25 days there has been no doctor in the multipurpose health facility. In Surat, for 29 days there has been no doctor on site. Those communities pay their taxes and they provide wealth for this state. The least that this Labor government could do is provide a full-time doctor to work in the health facilities. I will continue to fight for doctors in those communities because Labor is failing when it comes to the provision of doctors. Queenslanders deserve so much better and they will show Labor the door in '24.