




Speech By
Hon. Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cross River Rail

 **Hon. BA MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (2.14 pm): Before the election, the LNP promised that it would uncover and unravel Labor's mess and publish the true cost of Cross River Rail within 100 days of forming government in the spirit of openness and transparency. Today, I can share with the House that Cross River Rail is likely to exceed \$17 billion in costs—\$17 billion—and it is unlikely to be completed until 2029.

In the beginning, Labor promised Queenslanders time and time again that Cross River Rail would be delivered within a budget of \$5.4 billion and they promised that it would be finished by 2024—this year. Now it is clear just how far that dishonesty reached.

Before the election, the then transport minister Bart Mellish stood in front of estimates and said that we would have majority completion in 2025—next year—and first services in 2026. We now know that that is not possible. The true picture, the grim picture, is that what he claimed was the cost was just to build and maintain the tunnels, and that cost alone has now blown out to \$10.5 billion. On no fewer than 35 occasions Labor members, including the former premier Steven Miles, former transport ministers Mark Bailey and Bart Mellish, former treasurer Cameron Dick and numerous others over that side, came in here and claimed that Cross River Rail would cost \$5.4 billion.

Not only did the former Labor government hide the real cost of the tunnelling works for Cross River Rail; they also hid the cost of the integration works needed to ensure those tunnels were useful, to ensure the trains on the existing rail network could connect to them and to ensure there was stabling to park the trains in and practical station elements like platform doors. Those auxiliary works were hidden in other parts of the budget, in multiple separate line items, deliberately to misdirect Queenslanders from what the real cost was.

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: I can hear the member for Waterford interjecting, protecting the lady who trained her—former member for South Brisbane Jackie Trad. Jackie Trad's apprentice over there is yelling quite loudly.

Mr SPEAKER: I appreciate there is some provocation in the ministerial statement but the fact that I cannot hear the member for Buderim speaks volumes. The noise level is too high, members.

Mr MICKELBERG: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Thank you for your protection. Those auxiliary works were hidden in other parts of the budget in multiple separate line items to hide the true cost. Those opposite might try to claim that we are cooking the books. I saw that reported last night. We are cooking the books! We are inflating the numbers! That is what those opposite say. It is a bit rich coming from them, the same Labor members who cooked the books to hide all of those numbers. Who can forget the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program? The downfall of the now shadow health minister, the member for Miller, was because he hid a \$2 million blowout.

The interesting thing about the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program is that I have been criticised for including the maintenance costs of Cross River Rail in our numbers. I would argue that maintenance is a pretty important thing for a government to perform—just have a look at Callide Power Station. If we set that aside for a second, by their own measure the Labor Party included maintenance costs when it came to the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program yet they hid it on Cross River Rail. They hid it on Cross River Rail so they could mislead Queenslanders. Once again, Queenslanders have been let down by Labor's hollow rhetoric, this time by more than \$16 billion. That is a number that makes your eyes water, and it is one that taxpayers deserve to know about.

On top of that, the real estimated completion date is 2029 when we were told that services should be operating this year—2024; that was the original year. I have been briefed that 2029 is the likely year when services will be available for Queenslanders. All the delays do is drive up costs even further.

By contrast, I can guarantee that the Crisafulli government will fight for every taxpayer dollar. We will make sure that we work every single day to get Labor's Cross River Rail mess back on track. We will negotiate with Cross River Rail contractors to make sure they uphold their end of the bargain. We will make sure that we do not see the significant delays that have already mounted up this year. There have been 140 days of industrial action this year on Cross River Rail under Labor. The former government presided over 140 days of industrial action by the CFMEU on Cross River Rail.

Faced with a choice between siding with militant unions like the CFMEU and siding with the Queensland taxpayer, this Crisafulli government will always side with the taxpayer. The days of Labor taking Queenslanders for granted are done. The Crisafulli government will deliver a fresh start for Queensland.