




Speech By
Darren Zanow

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST

Record of Proceedings, 14 June 2024

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

 **Mr ZANOW** (Ipswich West—LNP) (12.25 pm): I rise today to reply to the Labor government's 10th budget. Make no mistake: this budget is nothing more than a desperate cash splash to distract from the pain the Palaszczuk government and the Miles Labor government—new, old but definitely the same Labor government—have inflicted on Queenslanders for nearly a decade, just like the pain, chaos and neglect for my home town of Ipswich.

In Ipswich, the poor cousin to Brisbane, we are witnessing the result of decade-long inaction by Labor. Jordan, Bundamba, Ipswich and Ipswich West have been regarded for so long by Labor as safe Labor seats. As such, Ipswich has been continuously overlooked for any real funding for anything of real substance for far too long. We have been taken for granted and the statistics paint a very clear picture.

Ipswich is the oldest provincial city in Queensland, yet we have the youngest population of any local government area. With a forecasted doubling of the current population by 2046, Ipswich is only halfway to being a city of 530,000 residents. To put this in perspective, Ipswich will add an extra 222,000 residents and create an extra 70,000 jobs over the next 17 years.

The growth in Ipswich is predicted to be the highest of anywhere in Queensland. In many ways you could say that the future of Queensland's growth and development lies in Ipswich. Its offering of city and towns and burgeoning industry sectors presents a city of opportunity for absolutely everyone. Ipswich is positioned in the rapidly expanding western growth corridor of South-East Queensland. It is the gateway to our neighbouring agricultural regions, home to the nation's largest RAAF base, with an abundance of land for industrial, commercial and residential growth.

Located at the confluence of three national land transport road routes, Ipswich connects to our southern states, to the wider South-East Queensland region and of course to Brisbane. Let's not forget the critical food industries on the western corridor through the Lockyer Valley—Queensland's salad bowl—and on to the largest inland city in Australia outside of the capital, Toowoomba. To truly take advantage of the opportunities Ipswich offers, we desperately need investment in core infrastructure projects, spanning transport and road connectivity, and upgraded sporting facilities, and to transition to a circular economy.

Ipswich West locals, like many others across Queensland, are desperate for housing to be built and delivered. We have heard promise after promise made and promise after promise broken by the Palaszczuk government and Miles Labor government—new, old, same government—when it comes to housing. After \$2 billion and three years, the Labor government have built zero homes with the Housing Investment Fund—zero.

As a former small business owner, I can say that this investment of capital with no product to show for return on investment just does not fly. It does not make sense. If I had run my business that way, I would be broke—much like the state Labor government is now. That is why I am proud of the LNP's Securing our Housing Foundations plan, which will get more Queenslanders and Ipswich West locals into homes. Under an LNP government, if you build or buy a new home as your first home then you will not pay a single dollar of stamp duty. Abolished. Gone. Finished. We will also offer a big boost into existing housing for first home owners by raising the threshold for full stamp duty concessions to \$700,000. This is a practical, real solution to help fix Queensland's housing crisis.

I am also proud to back our commitment to deliver over 53,000 additional social and community homes by 2044. The clear difference here is that we are going to be building, not selling off social homes like the Palaszczuk Labor government did in Leichhardt in my electorate of Ipswich West. Unlike the tired old Labor government opposite, we know that empowering people through home ownership means more security, more dignity and overall a happier, more productive society.

It is not only housing that Labor has failed my electorate on. They have also failed to investment in priority projects that are catalytic and region-shaping by nature, leaving the good, hardworking people of Ipswich behind and significantly limiting future growth opportunities. Ipswich is a significant driver of Queensland's economic prosperity. In the past two years alone our gross regional product has risen by almost \$2 billion to contribute over \$13.7 billion to the state's economy. By 2027 the Ipswich economy is predicted to burst through the \$18 billion mark. I want to make it very clear that this economic growth is in spite of Queensland's state Labor government. Let me give you an example when it comes to Transport and Main Roads funding and investment in connectivity for Ipswich locals.

Currently, Ipswich has the sixth largest population in Queensland but it was ranked 19th in terms of nominal investment across the 2023-24 to 2026-27 QTRIP. If we break that down further, we see that spending per capita across the four-year program equated to only \$395 per Ipswich resident. We are predicted to have the fastest growing population, but we are ranked 58 among LGAs in Queensland on a per capita comparison for investment. On Tuesday, the amount Ipswich will receive changed moderately to \$778 per Ipswich resident. Whilst this increase is of course welcome, Ipswich is still losing out to other SEQ councils like Logan, which will receive \$2,800 per resident across the next four years. I am sorry but, even with the increase in funding per person, for me that math does not add up. We are losing out. We need a state government that will invest in our great city to truly unlock all the region has to offer—not a government that is desperate to stay in power and remain relevant and that is throwing money around at the last minute.

It was not until the threat of losing the safe Labor seat of Ipswich West to the LNP at the recent by-election that true investment began in Ipswich. The pork-barrelling—sorry, investment—began with a promise of \$10 million for the North Ipswich Reserve development. This should have been a priority for the state government years ago because it was a catalyst to unlocking the promised \$20 million from the federal government and \$10 million from the Ipswich City Council for the project to proceed. But, no; leave the people of Ipswich hanging. That is what happened. For far too long the state Labor government did nothing, despite the Ipswich City Council continually advocating for this investment. On the eve of a by-election, for which their polling indicated a dire result, the promises started coming.

At least now, after all these years of Labor rule, the Mount Crosby interchange has been promised. It has only taken them eight years to find the funding needed for that project, as the then minister for transport and main roads stated they would do in 2016. Whilst we have seen \$277 million in joint state and federal funding committed to the Mount Crosby interchange, it honestly beggars belief to see that only \$2.7 million has been allocated over the next financial year to fix that vital piece of infrastructure. This means we are most likely going to see more plans and no action on the Mount Crosby interchange any time soon.

We also now have promised a major repair job for the Bremer River Bridge on the Warrego Highway. Once again, the Bremer River Bridge is an important piece of infrastructure that has not only state but also national significance as it links one of the most important freight corridors in our country. In 2019 a business case study to replace the Bremer River Bridge and identify significant defects was developed. Unfortunately, the report still has not been made available. What we have seen is a promise of \$85 million from joint federal and state funding to repair this bridge. The question remains: what will be the impact to the economy of reducing the Warrego Highway, part of the National Highway System, to a single lane in each direction? Over 5,700 heavy vehicles use the Bremer River Bridge daily, connecting the wealth of regional Queensland to Brisbane. To replace the concrete bridge deck will take several months. In some circles the prospect of replacing the concrete deck has sparked debate on whether that actually needs to happen. Here is the real kicker: once the work has been completed, how long will it be before the bridge needs replacing? In just 20 years we will need to replace the whole bridge. Is it really the best use of \$85 million worth of taxpayer dollars to repair a bridge that will hopefully

last 20 years? It all seems farcical. There is no clear communication, no clear plan and no direction for the people of Ipswich. It reminds me of the recently completed new Mount Crosby vehicle bridge over the Brisbane River. There was a perfect opportunity, but we missed it. People will still be flooded in following big releases from Wivenhoe.

When we look at it that is about all we will get around Ipswich despite urgently needing investment to start now to accommodate the projected 222,000 extra people we will have within the next 17 years. Projects in Ipswich that urgently need funding include: the upgrade of the Cunningham Highway intersection at Amberley, which we have been talking about for 27 years; an investment of \$4 million for a detailed business case for the Ipswich Central Second River Crossing; further investment in a business case for the Western Ipswich Bypass; more funding for local schools like Brassall, Tivoli and Leichhardt in particular, and Walloon and Amberley District state schools, all of which do a wonderful job educating kids but they need more support, especially as Ipswich continues to grow; and more funding to fix Warrego Highway intersections at places like Walloon, Amberley, Haigslea and Schultz Road—in only the last few weeks we have seen over 12 accidents.

When it comes to health, we are miles behind. Once again the statistics paint a dire picture for the health and wellbeing of Ipswich locals. Ambulance ramping at the Ipswich Hospital is one of the worst in the state. The March 2024 quarter data revealed that ramping was at 63.2 per cent, up 4.2 per cent in this year alone. This is nothing short of an utter disgrace. The Premier has proudly announced a record investment of \$28.9 billion in health, yet people are dying while ramped because of the health crisis this government has created. Getting patients off stretchers within 30 minutes is only at 59 per cent, despite the government's own goal of 90 per cent. Patients being seen in the emergency department within four hours is currently at 60 per cent despite the government's own goal of 80. This Labor government has continually failed the people of Ipswich when it comes to primary health care, just like they have failed and abandoned us on youth crime.

We have a youth crime crisis. Since being elected I have been regularly doorknocking and listening to the locals of Ipswich West. On one street alone in Leichhardt two people told me that their car had been stolen by youth criminals two nights running. Hardworking locals and families are just trying to get ahead, yet we constantly feel like we are being kicked in the guts. With break and enter offences up 54 per cent, assaults up 220 per cent and stolen car offences up 115 per cent since this Labor government watered down youth crime laws, you can see why they would feel that way. It seems to the people of Ipswich West that their safety and their lives just do not matter.

As at today, we are 1,500 police short on what the government promised. They might put a fancy spin on things but the fact is that people in my community feel less safe and less supported by this tired Labor government. This budget was another missed opportunity for the people of Queensland, especially the people of Ipswich. Instead of investing in region- and nation-building projects, instead of looking at ways to appropriately reduce the cost-of-living pressures and instead of enabling families to feel safe and have a roof over their heads, we have seen a desperate cash splash. This 10th Labor budget is clearly about the next four months, not the next four years.

The government before me are miles off the right priorities for Queenslanders. It is only an LNP Crisafulli government that will get this state back on track and deliver for the people of Queensland. To the people of Ipswich I say remember this: the only time the Palaszczuk-Miles government decided to care for you is when they thought they would lose power. They have had almost a decade in government and all Ipswich has to show for it is a crime crisis, a health crisis, a cost-of-living crisis and a housing crisis. This is nothing short of a desperate budget aimed at distracting people from the pain, chaos and neglect of this government.