




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

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

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (3.50 pm): I rise to make my contribution to the debate on the appropriation bills for 2024-25. This is yet another flawed budget from a government that is desperate to cling onto power. They are only interested in the next four months leading up to the October election and they are not looking to the future of Queensland. Queenslanders have put up with this dysfunctional government for far too long. This budget is an election budget through and through. It does not give any thought to how to fix the big-picture issues that everyday Queenslanders want fixed. This government is clearly focused on their bid for re-election and not on what is the right thing to do for the state. Queensland is a state with so much potential, yet this government is acting as a handbrake on that potential. They make no apology for the decisions they have made in this budget that will continue to hold Queensland back. In fact, they are crowing about how they are saving us all from cost-of-living pressures when they are actually driving this state into the biggest debt it has ever seen.

This is my third term in this House and I thought I had heard it all from the government ministers opposite. However, after delivering the budget, the Treasurer's statement telling Queenslanders 'not to judge them on their record' certainly takes some beating. Tell that to the victims of crime and their families, those who do not have a roof over their heads and the Queenslanders who have experienced failings with the health system. I am pretty sure they will be judging the government's appalling record. Isn't that what voters base their voting decision on: what the current government has done or, in this case, not done? It is clear that those opposite, led by the Premier, care more about their political future than Queensland's future and all of the people who live, work, raise families and invest in Queensland. This state is reeling from crisis to crisis without any plan to fix the mess this government has created. We are all paying the price for Labor's failings in health, housing, youth crime and on the cost of living. This will continue unless we have a change of government.

The government are constantly telling us that this budget will be paid for by coal royalties yet they seem to want to phase out coalmining so where will the money come from? As a state we are rich in natural resources and agricultural communities yet this government has delivered record debt and record taxes. Where have the rivers of gold gone? When this Labor government was elected in 2015, the total debt was \$72 billion. We now know that the debt is headed for \$172 billion. With interest, the repayments will reach \$21 million per day. Is it any wonder the Treasurer has pleaded with Queenslanders to forget about the Labor government's record?

I will remind Queenslanders why this tired third-term government wants Queenslanders to forget their record and I will start with health. Ambulance ramping is now at 46 per cent, which is a record. Is it any wonder they want the public to forget? They do hold other health records. Queensland now has a record elective surgery waiting list of more than 60,000 Queenslanders who are waiting for life-saving surgery and a record waiting list of 290 Queenslanders who are waiting to see a specialist. That is a record that this failed Labor government wants Queenslanders to forget, but they will not.

Queenslanders will not forget about the crime crisis that is gripping this state either. Between 2019 and 2023, the number of serious repeat offenders has risen by 66 per cent. Those offenders have no fear of repercussions as they know that under this government they will be back on the street with little more than a slap on the wrist. This government has not planned to house any more of those offenders in custody and prisons are at 140 per cent capacity, which is leading to an increase in assaults on both prisoners and staff. While offending continues to increase, the number of police officers on the beat has not. Queenslanders will remember that, at the last election, the police minister promised an extra 1,450 additional police officers. We are 1,539 officers short of that target. We have less now than at the last election. It is no different in Condamine. A number of stations are short-staffed and some are closed because there is no staff at all. Is it any wonder that the Premier wants us to forget the past?

I will now look at the government's record on housing. There are 43,000 Queenslanders on the social housing waiting list. Under this Labor government, Queensland has the highest rental increases in the country. Building approvals are 25 per cent below the 10-year average, while new housing lot approvals have fallen by 30 per cent. Nowhere in the state is immune from the housing crisis and homelessness is at the highest level in living memory. Every community has tent cities and people sleeping rough, but many more people are hidden. Those people are relying on friends and relations as they cannot find housing. Those are working families. I have heard of a family of four so desperate to put a roof over their heads that they are applying to rent a one-bedroom unit in Toowoomba.

Queensland has a severe timber shortage that is impacting on the delivery of new houses and adding to the cost increases yet, at the same time, sawmills are closing down because of the cost of doing business and red tape under this government. Earlier this week I attended the funeral of a best friend of mine, Victor Gersekowski. He was a third generation timber miller. The mill was established by his grandfather, Dick, and continued under his son, Noel. The mill then continued under Vic. Not long before he passed away, Vic told me that he would have to close the mill. He talked about the costs associated with the bureaucracy of this government. He said he had been hit with an environmental levy of \$60,000, which he had never had to pay before but was now expected to pay every year. He said, 'The mill cannot survive.' I said, 'Will you sell it?' He said, 'I am the third generation. If I can't make it pay, who can?' That is what is happening to the timber industry in this state.

The leader of the LNP, David Crisafulli, has announced our party's solution to the housing crisis created by the Labor government. The plan includes abolishing stamp duty for first home buyers and raising the stamp duty concession to \$800,000. It would see one million homes built by 2044 and 10,000 new social and community homes built on church and charity-owned land. The plan also includes a shared equity program that would give young people a chance to buy a home with a much reduced deposit.

The education of our children is suffering from the failed policies of this government. Most schools are suffering from a lack of teachers. Schools in Condamine are not immune and are also suffering from staff shortages. At the last election, the government promised to deliver 6,100 new teachers and 1,100 teacher aides. Instead, we have seen an increase of 1,054 teachers and aides combined. That is not even close.

An opposition member: That's Labor governments.

Mr WEIR: That is Labor. Queenslanders are being asked by the Labor government to forget about their past. Queensland power prices continue to be the highest in the nation, despite what those opposite say. They like to quote power prices with the subsidies included. The Labor government has lost control of power prices in this state and the only way they have left to address it is through subsidies. The long-suffering power consumers will welcome the \$1,000 subsidy off their power bill, but they are not fooled by it. This government has continuously spruiked that they would put downward pressure on power prices. Under this government, the only direction power prices have gone is up.

There is no better example of how this government has failed this state on power than Callide. The events of three years ago remain cloaked in secrecy. We await to hear about the Brady review but, after stories in today's media, it now appears we may never see that and we may never know what happened at Callide C4. Why would this be? There is only one reason and that is that they want to hide it and keep the public in the dark for fear of the full level of their incompetence being exposed.

The LNP leader has announced that we will not be building the Pioneer-Burdekin hydro dam. Minister de Brenni stated that he thought this was extraordinary given we have not seen the business case. The minister could have fixed that by tabling the business case along with all the necessary approvals and perhaps a petition from all the impacted locals expressing their support for this project, but he will not because he has none of these things. The thing that is extraordinary about this project is that he and the government continue to mislead Queenslanders that this project will proceed when blind

Freddy knows it will not. The Auditor-General at a recent public hearing stated that the proposed pumped hydro schemes were unlikely to be financially viable. These ever-increasing prices are having a financial impact on business and agriculture which, once again, was largely ignored in this budget.

This Labor government has failed on biosecurity particularly with fire ants. Fire ants are on the march in the South-East, marching south, north and now west. We have had two recent outbreaks in Condamine, one on the outskirts of Oakey and the other at Meringandan. This government has completely failed in their biosecurity obligations and has failed Queenslanders, and they will be remembered for this failure. Is it any wonder that the Premier and the Treasurer want Queensland to forget about their record?

I would like to wax lyrical about all the new projects that are to be delivered to the residents of Condamine in this budget but, alas, that is not the case. We were pleased to see the works on the Bowenville Norwin Road in this budget as it was almost impassable, and that is being funded under the disaster recovery funding. Other than that, there were two reannouncements and that was it.

This budget is about winning the election in October and pork-barrelling Labor held seats. This is a government that will do and say anything and use taxpayers' money to hold onto power. They want Queenslanders to forget the past, but they will not. They will not forget the crime crisis, the health crisis, the housing crisis and the cost-of-living crisis. Queenslanders have the opportunity to cast judgement on this failed Labor government on the last Saturday in October and show Labor the door in '24.