




Speech By  
**Ros Bates**

**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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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 BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (4.57 pm): I begin my contribution by saying this: it is now blatantly obvious that this Labor government will do and say anything to be re-elected. It is unlike anything I have ever seen during my time in politics. For Labor, there are no more guiding principles. There are no more core values. There is no more respect for the taxpayer dollar. Those opposite are entirely devoid of all of that now. Their only guiding principle, their only core value, is their own political survival and Queenslanders are absolutely aware of this because Queenslanders are a sharp bunch. They are clued right into what the Labor government are trying to pull.

The Premier, the Treasurer and those who occupy the benches opposite are not worried in the slightest about the future of Queensland. They might pretend that they are and they are trying to say it until they are blue in the face, but it is just so contrived and so shallow that it is becoming embarrassing. They are only worried about making it through the next four months. That has become so obvious not only through their words but through their actions in this budget. I get the strong sense that Queenslanders are becoming more and more embarrassed by the actions of the Premier, the Treasurer and the Labor government.

I think Queenslanders are embarrassed by how Labor is managing our state's affairs and how the Labor government's actions are viewed across our country and internationally. The absolute mess they have managed to make around the Olympics and Paralympic Games is a case in point. Queenslanders do not tend to mind so much if a government has a crack, falls short, acknowledges their shortcomings, dusts themselves off and gets on with delivering. I think Queenslanders will cop that, but that has not happened in this budget. In fact, that has not happened in Queensland for a very long time.

That was plain to see with this now infamous line in the Treasurer's budget speech when speaking about the upcoming election. He stated—

Queenslanders will be asked to make a choice about their future, not to express an opinion about the past.

I almost fell out of my chair when I heard that. It was so brazen. It was so pathetic. It was an outright embarrassment. That is not having a crack for Queenslanders. That is not acknowledging the errors of the past. It is trying to dismantle and rewrite history. It was not just some poorly thought out comment that slipped into his speech. Unbelievably, the Treasurer went back to the well in his press conference on budget day when he said—

The election on 26 October is a fight about the future of Queensland, it's not a referendum on the last nine years.

You cannot make this up. The very same people who delivered the woeful record of this government over the last nine years are now bizarrely trying to erase the very history they wrote. I wonder what the former premier might think about all of this. She was cast aside by her union masters

last year and now she has been completely cut adrift by the most senior members of her cabinet in the most unceremonious fashion. So uncomfortable and so uneasy are they with their own record under her leadership that they are now utterly desperate to erase the history of their own actions. That is, of course, despite the fact that both the Premier and the Treasurer were the two most senior ministers in the previous administration. It is laughable. Like I said at the beginning, Labor and Premier Miles will do and say anything to get themselves elected again. They will do and say anything even if it means personally eroding the actions of their former leader and trying to erase the role they played in her government. It is an utter embarrassment and those opposite ought to be ashamed for even having the gall to try this kind of rubbish on.

When we talk about the history of this Labor Miles administration one would be hard-pressed to find a darker chapter than their record of running Queensland Health. Mired in scandal, chaotic and crisis prone—these are the hallmarks of Labor's record of running Queensland Health over the course of the last decade and I do not see any evidence in this budget which would suggest Queenslanders can expect anything different. When this time of year rolls around we inevitably hear the same tired, worn-out catchcry 'record health budget', and so it is this year too. Those on the other side love to say it, but scratch the surface and the catchcry is just that: a catchcry. I want to unpack those record health budgets in years gone by and what they have actually delivered for Queenslanders.

Record health budgets have delivered Queenslanders record ambulance ramping: 45.5 per cent, the worst on record, the highest ever recorded and it is in every sense of the word unprecedented. Record health budgets have delivered Queenslanders record waiting lists for elective surgery: over 60,000 patients. Data released this year revealed that figure. Never in our state's history have so many patients been waiting for elective surgery. It is yet another unwanted record delivered by Labor's record health budget. Then there is the waiting list to see a specialist. It is creeping up to nearly 300,000 Queenslanders. That figure has never been as high as it has been in the last 12 months. That is what the record health budgets Labor have delivered for Queensland.

What about our state's emergency departments? The number of people spending 24 hours or more in EDs soared by 375 per cent between 2015-16 and 2022-23. That means last financial year it was 18,000 Queenslanders. Again, they are record levels, numbers that have never, ever been seen before. There is definitive, rock-solid, clinical evidence that suggests the longer a patient spends in an ED the longer their length of stay will be in hospital. There is also a higher rate of mortality associated with extended emergency department stays. ED professionals call it a 'never' event because a patient staying that long in an ED should never happen. In Queensland it is happening with alarming regularity. That is Labor's record of delivery with their record health budgets.

Of course, there is an important failure that spans both the health and women's portfolios, which is the Labor government's abysmal record when it comes to rural maternity services. Maternity services in Chinchilla, Cooktown and Biloela remain bypassed for the women of those communities. There is nothing in this budget to suggest those services will reopen any time soon. Recently we learnt that women in communities like Beaudesert, Ingham and Ayr regularly faced the prospect of their local hospital intermittently being bypassed for birthing. Women in Weipa were forced to wait five years from the time the then health minister and now Premier promised their birthing service would reopen until it actually did. Based on that logic, it will be 2029 before another rural maternity service opens to Queensland women under Labor's rule. How many more might close in that time if Labor are given another term?

Listening to all of that—the litany of failures presided over by Labor—it is so apparent that the die has been cast. Under those opposite there is now a clear and present trend. Labor's promise of record health budgets healing the Queensland health crisis cannot and should not be trusted. It is a complete fallacy. Despite their claims to fix ambulance ramping, slash waiting lists or unclog EDs, it has never happened. In fact, not only do they not achieve their objectives; things have gotten worse. My heart goes out to those dedicated clinicians who are trying their best every minute of every hour of every day. None of this is their fault. The problems they face are not of their own making. They are systemic, cultural and structural issues that the Labor government has never addressed. Paramedics did not sign up to be ramped. Surgeons did not sign up to sit idle. Nurses did not sign up to see their patients spend an entire day in an emergency department. I want to place on record again my unconditional thankyou to every clinician and every person who makes the hospitals and clinics across Queensland tick. They will always have my admiration. My LNP colleagues and I know what their inherent focus is as clinicians, and that is exceptional patient care. That is what they strive to deliver every day, and we have heard their own calls that delivering this under the conditions they are subjected to is becoming increasingly tough.

Should the LNP be given the special privilege to form government at the October 2024 election, that too will be our priority. Record budgets might sound nice, but record budgets are not an outcome. Tangibly improving the lives of people, patients and clinicians is an outcome that counts for something. If those things are the focus, the entire culture of the organisation will shift. If given the opportunity, the LNP will set a culture where accountability, transparency and ownership will be at the forefront of the health system. It is those things that can drive improved patient outcomes. Under the conga line of health ministers that Labor has thrown up over the last 10 years, accountability and transparency have been severely lacking and ownership has been non-existent. The latest example of the lack of transparency and accountability is Labor's Health and Hospitals Plan outlined in this budget. The Capacity Expansion Program under the plan was to build or revamp 15 hospitals. That program has blown out by nearly \$1.5 billion according to the budget papers. The original price tag was \$9.785 billion for 2,200 beds. The new price tag is \$11.215 billion for 2,200 beds. Let me just crystallise that for the benefit of the House: not one new bed for \$1.5 billion. The minister and the Treasurer say it is not a cost blowout. Seriously? If it is not that, what on earth is it? Just for once the minister should be honest about this. Queenslanders deserve to know.

I turn now to my own electorate of Mudgeeraba and another appalling example of Labor's laziness and disregard. For almost a decade the good people of the best area in Queensland have been ignored by Labor governments and, even worse, they have been treated like fools. Every year the Labor Treasurer makes the same hollow promises, reannouncing a range of projects that have already been promised. Those opposite are hoping desperately that no-one will notice they keep reannouncing upgrades to Nerang Murwillumbah Road even though we continue to have fatalities, reannouncing a train station at Merrimac—that one has been announced seven times—and reannouncing a visitors centre at Springbrook National Park. The people of Mudgeeraba are not fools. They can see through this shallow, self-serving, desperate government. They know pork-barrelling when they see it—money being diverted to Labor seats whose desperate MPs know that the writing is on the wall. They are trying to spend their way back into a fourth term. This is a budget for four months, not four years. In the meantime in Mudgeeraba we are crying out for better roads, including a lifesaving improvement to the Austinville causeway. For years we have been calling for a new state high school west of the M1 to cater for families who are flocking to live in Mudgeeraba.

We are fighting for CCTV cameras to help the wonderful men and women in blue who are trying to prosecute the hoons terrorising our suburbs, but this government does not care. They do not think my constituents are worth it. My electorate can see through this. They know that this government is more concerned about its political future and not Queensland's future. My electorate knows that the only things this Labor government has delivered are a health crisis, a youth crime crisis, a housing crisis and a cost-of-living crisis. In four months they will finally have the chance to hand down their verdict on this shambolic, underperforming government. The people of Mudgeeraba cannot wait until October 2024. The people of Mudgeeraba and Queensland deserve so much more.