




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (5.35 pm): Let's look at the backdrop to this budget. Queenslanders, like others across Australia, have endured financial and emotional hardship since the COVID-19 pandemic. The fallout from COVID continued, overwhelming our policing and medical services from increases in domestic violence and mental health issues—and a housing crisis. Post-COVID inflation hit and CPI rose 3.6 per cent. Regardless, the Queensland economy is performing well, having the highest growth of all states and territories in the last quarter. However, with the unrest and wars around the world and some uncertainty, the global economy could head into recession.

The Reserve Bank of Australia observed that economic growth remains slow and inflation is higher than expected, with higher interest rates adding to an even higher level of hardship in households. Understandably, Queenslanders welcomed the relief through this budget via electricity rebates, a discount on registration, food for our children at school, 50-cent transport fares and many increases in existing supports such as FairPlay vouchers. However, this all has to come from somewhere. According to the budget financials, it is not from extra income as revenue is expected to fall by \$1 billion next year; nor is it from decreased government expenses as they have risen.

Queensland will end this financial year with a net operating surplus of \$564 million; however, it will then head to a deficit of \$2.63 billion in the year ahead. This means we are borrowing money from next year to spend now and the banks will come asking for it. As I asked during the week, at what point will we get to sustainable living and not require government subsidies to survive in our households? However, to put this in context, our forward deficit is no greater than the annual interest earned by some Australians on their wealth. As I said last night, that is something to ponder.

I turn now to specifics for Noosa, where we have both joy and disappointment. After delays to the Lake MacDonald refurbishment, it is wonderful to see \$72 million allocated to get this safety work done. While the official opening of Six Mile Creek bridge No. 7 was celebrated last week, the need to create greater safety on Kin Kin Road remains. It was welcomed to see a total of \$37 million allocated. That these sums have been required due to inappropriate levels of heavy haulage through our villages is another example of our system failings. However, I thank former TMR minister Mark Bailey, who listened to our pleas, as well as the current minister who is equally committed. The first disappointment of this budget was the missing \$1 million required for a pedestrian crossing in Pomona so that residents can safely traverse this road, which is, again, impacted by heavy haulage. I make a plea to the minister on this.

Back to the good news, there is \$25 million to widen the Eumundi-Noosa Road from Emu Mountain Road to Beckmans Road. However, this is where our second disappointment lies. After the completion of stage 1 of the Tewantin Bypass, which is fabulous, to address the congestion, stage 2 needed construction funding by the next budget, but the detailed design moneys required in this budget

to make that happen are nowhere to be seen. Regardless of the reasons for the delays that have led to this, whether on TMR's end or Noosa council's end, I ask the minister to fast-track and fund the requirements to get it back on track.

I move on to our rail. The good news was the \$115 million to start the Beerburum to Nambour rail upgrade stage 1. However, there was not anything in the budget for a Nambour to Gympie rail shuttle, which is vital, and we await the outcomes from the northern line study.

Our businesses are receiving some assistance, with \$650 off their electricity bills and extra access to initiatives in the Queensland Small Business Strategy including business supports, natural disaster recovery and extra cash grants, which they do need. It was lovely that out at Kin Kin \$500,000 has been provided for eco villas from the Tourism Experience Development Fund. I look forward to seeing them on completion. However, we do need to reduce red tape for our businesses and also expand the ability of the Small Business Commissioner to resolve disputes. There are many of those still ongoing in the fallout from COVID.

For our local sports clubs, the Noosa Yacht & Rowing Club received \$225,000 and the Pomona-Cooroy football club \$200,000. Now we are searching for the funds for the Tigers lighting!

On the education front, we celebrated the opening of the new hall at the Noosa District State High School Pomona campus. I think that is on Monday. It was really good to see within the budget papers that there is progress on the advanced manufacturing unit for Sunshine Beach State High School. There were some other bits and bobs. There was \$300,000 for refurbishment at Tewantin State School, \$100,000 for water upgrades at Cooran and just over \$600,000 for maintenance across our schools.

However, an area that needs improvement is funding for tuckshops as this is obviously inadequate given that we have schools for a number of years unsuccessfully applying for grants to do the works needed. With the loss of our TAFE a decade ago, we are still waiting for the finalisation of the native title determination so that the successful proponents can finally get to work. It has been a long journey. We will also need funds into the future for a possible learning hub that Noosa council has been working on, with the feasibility study completed.

There was welcomed news on our health front, with additional funding for the Queensland Ambulance Service which will result in 12 extra paramedics for the Sunshine Coast, which Noosa will obviously benefit from. In addition, for mental health there was the extra requested youth co-responder team and a second mental health CORE team for our region. We look forward to finding, in amongst the buckets of funds, either grants or allocations for our Noosa Salvos to provide after-hours and weekend supports for both mental health and emergency accommodation. This is really important because a lot of this assistance stops at four o'clock on a Friday, and we need to move beyond that. As well, we need some co-location of services provided through the Better Care Together mental health program.

An expected decision is due on Noosa Private Hospital's appeal against Noosa council. We look forward, regardless of the outcome, to the finalisation of negotiations between Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service and Ramsay on the emergency department's expansion as well as the required extra contracts.

There was no mention of fairer funding models for our palliative care hospices. I know we are waiting on the completion of the review that we fought so hard for. We appreciate the increases recently provided to our Katie Rose Cottage Hospice. However, we still need more.

The extra funding for domestic, family and sexual violence is welcomed, as well as the funding for perpetrator programs. At this time, I can see no mention of a DFV court for the Sunshine Coast which is much needed.

Housing announcements, as we have heard, are around stamp duty and a doubling of the Queensland first home owner grant. However, as I said in my Help to Buy speech, these initiatives do not increase the affordable housing stock and can potentially push prices up. With a real need for more social and community housing, the budget does commit additional funding as part of producing 53,000 dwellings by 2046. However, as I have raised before, Q Shelter have said we need 175,000 by 2036, so there is clearly still a shortfall. In digging around the budget we are yet to find the amounts allocated for our Cooroy housing project or for the 36 Tewantin units that have been through the design phase. However, I know they are there and I will find them.

For our environment, there is \$1.1 million for coastal walk upgrades in Noosa National Park, with the only extra funding being very targeted such as to improve firefighting capabilities. With Queensland lagging behind other states and territories in funding per hectare—and I have raised this before—the needed increase of \$200 million over four years has not been found, nor funds for a new independent

environmental protection authority or for the environmental upgrade agreement process. That is important because that will then allow landowners to be able to put solar on their houses which will then benefit renters.

I move on to our policing. The budget provided for 98 additional officers for the Sunshine Coast, and we are waiting on the amount that is to be allocated for Noosa as well as the timeline for those. However, without accommodation available, it is impossible to secure any staff in any industry in my community, let alone police, and I ask that provision be made to ensure there are no barriers to securing these extra frontliners.

Welcomed news was the \$1.12 billion allocated to community safety, and it has been good to see that many of these measures align with the recommendations from the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee. They include the all-important much earlier interventions to support children from their earliest years through to preventions via educational engagement and health services from birth. In addition, family support coordinators and behavioural specialists in primary schools and early childhood coordinators are important. Especially appreciated has been the extra funding to Victim Assist to reduce the delays and to expand supports to victims of nonviolent crimes, as well as those youth co-responder teams I mentioned earlier and an expansion of the intensive case management program, including on the Sunshine Coast.

Overall, from the 60 recommendations from the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee report, between the Community Safety Bill and this budget it looks like so far 36 have been addressed. I am not sure because I still have to go hunting. However, I do thank the government very much for the speedy response that has been sought by Queenslanders.

There is much more to explore in this budget over the coming days. It has brought relief through cost-of-living measures as well as some hope, not only in relation to the major issues of crime, health and housing but also to what may be considered 'less major' issues for our communities. I feel that we have been listened to even if it has taken longer than we would have liked. I want to thank and congratulate the Treasurer and all those across government who have worked so hard in ongoing difficult times.

It can be no easy task putting together such a large and complex budget. Let's be honest: it is much easier for us as MPs to find fault and gaps as we get ready for estimates. That does not mean that we do not appreciate what has and is being fought for. We are thankful even if it appears that we may not be. May the hardest times now recede into the past and we really focus on working to get beyond the need to subsidise into the future.