




Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (2.31 pm): During all of the years of crises—the youth crime crisis, the health crisis, the housing crisis and the cost-of-living crisis—there is one constant. They all tie back to one thing: they are all the direct result of a government that has been so consumed by itself that it has not kept an eye on what is happening to Queenslanders. After a decade of failures, Queenslanders know it. They know it when they go out in the morning and the vehicle they need to make a living is gone. They know it when they pick up the phone to call an ambulance and that hardworking paramedic is probably stuck at the end of a ramp. They know it when their kids' dream of owning a home disappears before their eyes.

The battlelines for the next election are drawn. After nearly a decade, have things got better or worse when it comes to the youth crime crisis, the housing crisis, the health crisis and the cost-of-living crisis? Who has the right priorities for Queensland's future? The choice at the next election is a government that is rotting before the eyes of Queenslanders or a united, focused opposition that has the right priorities for Queensland's future. This is an opposition that has listened and reflected and understands that Queenslanders are living through the chaos and crisis of a very bad government. How good was the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply speech before lunchtime?

I often get asked, 'If renewable energy is cheap, why does it have to be subsidised?' The government's official line is that renewable energy is cheap. If it is so cheap, why is the Treasurer giving households a \$1,000 subsidy so we can afford to pay for it? Labor boasts that the amount of cheap wind and solar energy has increased by 25 per cent, yet electricity bills have risen by 18 per cent on average according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. If renewable energy is as cheap as the government claims, Labor would surely risk being trampled underfoot by an influx of investors, yet investment in renewable energy is at its lowest level for eight years and investors struggle to see how they can make money on wind and solar without government support.

Having failed to deliver cheap energy, the government has been forced to resort to cheap politics. Money that could have been given in tax cuts or paying down public debt will instead be spent to disguise the truth: energy has become more expensive under a government that came to power promising the opposite. Rather than expressing its disappointment and embarking on plan B, the government is doubling down, promising to spend more of our money on an expanded list of subsidies. The latest multibillion dollar addition to the government's renewable energy budget uncovers an unpleasant truth: energy users in my electorate will pay more for power for a long time to come, so reflect on the \$1,000 that will go toward your power bill this year which has cost another \$3 billion. Someone—that is you, Queenslanders—has to pay for this \$26 billion investment in renewable energy.

I am often asked why we have accepted a bar that is set so low on so many things. What is disturbing is a government celebrating a budget that continues to lower the bar in Queensland, with crises now embedded in our everyday lives. We should not have to accept diminished health services or celebrate long waiting lists and elective surgery blowouts. After a decade of neglect, the bar is very low. If I had said 10 years ago that modular tiny homes would be rolled out to deal with Labor's housing crisis, most people would have scoffed and said, 'You're dreaming.' Instead of fixing roads in my electorate, all we do now is lower speed limits. When we do achieve something, we pat ourselves on the back and tell ourselves that everything is great.

I note that the Camera Detected Offence Program has been given another \$80 million over four years. It does nothing to save lives. It is a revenue earner, but the government refuses to provide any details of the amount of revenue. Questions on notice go unanswered. What this has done to my community over a long period of time has been devastating. It is unfair; it is unreasonable. This program really needs to be looked at. No-one wants to take responsibility and no-one cares about taking the time to answer constituents' queries about this program. It is a rort.

It is important that the people of Queensland recognise the trajectory of debt. We are getting up around \$170 billion, with interest costs of nearly \$21 million a day. There will be a lot of commentary over the next couple of days about what that \$21 million a day could pay for.

Locally in my electorate, I want to touch on areas that did not receive attention again: Agnes Water health infrastructure or partnerships; Rosedale Road overtaking lanes; the Bargara and Hughes roads intersection upgrade; Moneys Creek Lagoon rehabilitation; Essendean Bridge and Tablelands Road flood mitigation; the Bundaberg to Bargara multimodal pathway; Round Hill Creek rehabilitation; Paperbark Walk upgrade and protection; Walkers Point boat ramp upgrade; and Elliott Heads State School's new prep building. This school has been dealing with this terrible building over a long period of time and our hearts go out to the parents, teachers and particularly students who continue to be ignored.

We want to see real support for the Rural Fire Service and VMR and SES volunteers, and there is still no acknowledgement of the value of volunteer dress uniforms for rural fires. It might sound minor, but we have been pushing for this for many years. We want to make sure those volunteers feel valued in their job. There is no new fire station for Bundaberg and nothing in the budget for Bargara sporting infrastructure. Travel subsidies for people trying to get to TAFE and vocational training from more remote areas have been ignored.

I will address the ongoing scare campaign and fake commentary on what the LNP will or will not do in the Bundaberg region. Let me be clear. We have fought against Labor's destruction of Paradise Dam over a long period of time. We have maintained our advocacy to reinstate water security for the region. The LNP will fix Paradise Dam. So that we can stop the nonsense, can I be clear that we are not going to cut funding to the new Bundaberg Hospital. There is a scare campaign being run through the community that somehow a backbencher in the LNP has some sort of control over what will be built when it is already underway.

Queenslanders still have no idea what is going on with Paradise Dam and there is no clear timeline. I point out that I think nearly a billion dollars has already been spent and there is another \$110 million in this budget for planning and enabling works. From tearing down the wall at \$600 million to the hundreds of millions that go every year on consultants, imagine what could have been done if something more sensible had been started a long time ago. Maybe they should not have torn down the wall in the first place.

I say to Queenslanders that in four months time there is a choice: a fear campaign, or the hope that is being offered by the opposition; more cuts, chaos and crisis from those opposite, or an opposition that is focused on the right priorities. Queenslanders have a real choice. Queensland is a state of opportunity, but we see Queenslanders being held back by a dysfunctional government veering into a state of chaos and crisis. Restoring Queensland's opportunity is what drives us on this side every day. Opportunity is also what drives Queenslanders. Queenslanders see a collapsing health system, a lack of affordable housing options, a youth crime crisis and a government that has given up honestly working for them. They are frustrated. The current government is no longer listening to Queenslanders' priorities. The government is focused on itself rather than our state's future, yet Queenslanders remain confident in the underlying fact that we live in a state with unmatched resources, a great environment and endless possibilities. They just want a government that will help Queensland reach its potential.

The LNP is working on charting a new course for our state, restoring confidence and making Queensland the land of opportunity once more. My job is to focus on Bundaberg and the Burnett's priorities, and I will continue to do that until the bitter end. An LNP government will do this by providing stability and governing with integrity. We will provide better services for Queenslanders. Most importantly, we will deliver on the promises we make.

Queenslanders have spoken and we have listened. The LNP is committed to putting the focus back on the needs of Queenslanders. We will make it our mission to restore public faith in those who have the privilege to serve our great state. Queenslanders' aspirations will be our goals, with an LNP government putting ordinary people at the heart of its plans to secure Queensland's future. There will be no more dithering on youth crime, no more excuses on the health crisis, no more paying for Labor's failures and no more queues around the block to secure a home. An LNP government will work harder for Queenslanders. I look forward to working with the good people of my region to deliver the right priorities for Queensland's future.