




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

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

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (9.16 pm): I would like to begin my contribution to the budget with a reference to where the Treasurer ended his budget speech contribution yesterday. On page 24 of his budget speech contained in Budget Paper No. 1, the member for Woodridge stated—

It is no secret that on 26 October, Queenslanders face a choice. Queenslanders will be asked to make a choice about their future not to express an opinion about the past.

This ridiculous pompous statement supports our assertion that it is a budget for the next four months, not the next four years and beyond. This is not a new government. This is definitely not a new government. It is a collection of recycled ministers who simply have been rearranging deck chairs on the *Titanic*.

It is no wonder this failed Labor government is simply trying to airbrush the last decade. It is like a scene from *The Simpsons*. You know the old saying: 'Move along, people. There is nothing to see here!' Never has the Queensland government taxed more, borrowed more, or spent more with less to show for it than under the Palaszczuk-Miles government. Despite, as has been said by members on this side of the chamber, revenue rivers of gold, Labor has delivered record debt and record taxes. Concerningly, we also have record numbers of Queenslanders sleeping in tents, record numbers of crime victims, record ambulance ramping and record numbers of Queenslanders who are struggling to simply make ends meet. It is incredulous that the Treasurer has now received \$69 billion more than forecast in his first budget, yet Queenslanders incredibly have less to show for it.

In 10 budgets Labor has added \$100 billion worth of debt. Total debt was \$72 billion when Labor was elected and will be \$172 billion by the end of the forwards. Interest costs will be over \$21 million per day at the end of the forwards. In other words, Queenslanders will be in debt to the tune of \$875,000 in interest payments each and every hour. In other words, if the Queensland government owned outright a house worth \$875,000, they would have to sell it on the hour every hour just to pay our interest. It is incredible. Queensland spent \$32 billion more than we will be earning in the next four years.

I have previously commented that throwing ever increasing 'record budget' amounts of money into key government areas such as transport and main roads, health and education is not—and never has been—in itself a real measure of success. Every minister spruiks about this year being a record budget, so what is new? Labor seems to simplistically equate success with how much money it throws at an area of public policy rather than what it actually delivers for hardworking Queenslanders. Simply put, it is what you do with resources rather than continually throwing borrowed money at an issue.

I want to address some of the budget items pertaining to the Department of Transport and Main Roads. Let us be clear: the Miles Labor government is clawing back the discounts it is giving, the little trinkets it is giving, before the forthcoming election. Let us have a look at motor vehicle registration revenue. In the election year, this year, motor vehicle registration revenue will decrease by \$306 million.

The year after it will increase by \$424 million. They give Queenslanders a short-term sugar hit before the election, but then they claw back \$424 million thereafter. South-East Queensland public transport fare revenue in the election year will decrease by \$130 million. The year after it will increase by \$163 million. Again, they give a short-term sugar hit before the election but then claw back \$163 million afterwards.

Despite this smoke-and-mirrors approach, the LNP welcome—it has been repeatedly said—anything that will provide cost-of-living relief. We welcome cost-of-living relief in the form of 50-cent public transport fares as a means of inducing demand. The government has stated that the measure of success is returning patronage to pre-pandemic levels. However, budget documents show that patronage next year is forecast to increase by only 3.3 per cent, leaving it lower than before the pandemic and lower than when Labor came to power in 2015. In other words, the trial is to see if Labor can get re-elected rather than increase patronage and deal with the ever-growing traffic congestion caused by this inept government's failure to simply invest in our road network.

In terms of new projects, there are no new major projects announced in this budget—zip! All the government could rustle up over the weekend was the announcement of an extension to a train signalling system. Whistleblowers have told me that the project is only going ahead because the existing signalling system has reached the end of life and must be replaced ahead of schedule. I call on the transport minister to say whether this will have any impact on the Cross River Rail opening timeframe. Let us not forget that this was the signature infrastructure project which was originally slated to open in 2024, then 2025 and now 2026.

I now turn to the Gympie Road bypass tunnel. Projects in the transport minister's own electorate show that they cannot be trusted to deliver important projects like the Gympie Road bypass tunnel. The Beams Road open level crossing replacement was supposed to start in 2021. It did not. The Link Road overpass still has not started. The project cost of the Gympie Road bypass tunnel is claimed to be \$7 billion. However, if members go through the budget they will see it allocates only \$318 million for pre-construction works, meaning construction will not start until at least 2027-28. Sadly, the tunnel probably will not be ready in time for the Olympics. Based on these numbers, under a Labor government it will not start until about 2035. By that stage, using a discounted cash flow rate of around 5¼ per cent—and I did not get that advice from the Treasurer, that is for sure, who still grapples to understand what a discount rate is, let alone a discounted cash flow rate—that would probably cost \$14 billion. This government is absolutely clueless when it comes to project infrastructure management.

On other project costs, why has the government slashed funding for the School Transport Infrastructure Program? It was \$32.9 million in last year's budget. This year's budget shows the program has been reduced to \$16.1 million and zero will be spent in 2024-25. On the inland freight route, the government promised to bring forward \$107 million in funding. They spent an extra \$4.1 million in 2023-24 but have reduced funding in the 2024-25 financial year by \$10 million. These are just a couple of examples where Labor has moved money around to balance the books because of massive cost blowouts in other projects, and let us go through some of them.

There is around half a billion dollars extra on the M1 Varsity Lakes to Tugun, another \$863 million on the Coomera Connector, another \$44 million on the Linkfield Road overpass project, another \$453 million for Beerburrum to Nambour rail, another \$162 million on Cooroy to Curra D and another \$665 million on the Rockhampton Ring Road. The Minister for Transport and Main Roads wants to talk up the transport and main roads budget and tell us it is a record big build and that everything is tickety-boo, but like his predecessor in previous years it is more of a smoke-and-mirrors exercise. The master and the apprentice—some things simply do not change.

I will take a bit of a deeper dive into the QTRIP. In the interests of time I will highlight just one of those projects which is of particular interest to me. It is the upgrade of the Maryborough Hervey Bay Road and Pialba Burrum Heads Road intersection. I was in beautiful Hervey Bay only a matter of a month or two ago and I went to this intersection. The only project growth I could see there was the grass. Nothing is happening. Despite the local member and the member of the adjoining electorate often sprouting that this is their No. 1 priority project, there was little to show for it.

The bottom line is this: at the end of the day when I look at the Service Delivery Statements I always try to find at least a kernel of positivity. I will give a bit of a plug to the Department of Transport and Main Roads staff. When I went through the Service Delivery Statements in relation to the department's service delivery from a customer service perspective, page 7 outlines their customer experience standards and effectiveness measures. I have previously stated that I am very honoured to have been appointed the first shadow minister for customer service by the opposition leader. I want to put on the record my congratulations to the Transport and Main Roads staff on their KPIs that they have

actually hit for the second year in a row. I absolutely congratulate them on that. However, if I look at the same document, the Service Delivery Statements, on page 6 I see that the Queensland government failed to meet its own road safety targets in this budget.

The Queensland government is expecting to pocket millions more in traffic fines this financial year following a surge in penalties. However, tragically, the number of fatalities on Queensland roads is today 15 above the same time last year. Revenue for the Camera Detected Offence Program is expected to be approaching around half a billion dollars in 2024-25. Again, I ask the minister: what is the actual plan to improve road safety on Queensland roads? I have previously stated that the role of the opposition is to hold the government to account. I would give anything to see, along with, I am sure, all members in this chamber, a massive reduction in the road toll. It is absolutely chaotic not just for the families involved but also in relation to their place of employment. We need to be doing everything possible to drive down the road carnage on Queensland roads.

From a local perspective, there is little comment to make. Like many of the members on this side of the chamber have said in relation to their own electorates, the people in my Chatsworth electorate have received hardly a thing. It is extremely disappointing but not unexpected. I have spoken about delayed projects, cost blowouts, broken promises. What is the government doing when it comes to the all-important long-term vision for crucial infrastructure for the Olympic Games? That, again, is missing in action. As I have previously stated, if the cut-and-run, former member for Greenslopes, now member for Woodridge, wants to continue with his dream of channelling a famous US president with the black-and-white or sepia photo he takes at this time each year for the budget, maybe he should heed the sage words of a real leader, Abraham Lincoln, who said, 'You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.'

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Pause the clock. Members, there is way too much noise. The member for Maryborough will cease his interjections.

Mr MINNIKIN: At the end of the day, what does this budget promise for younger people in Queensland? Very little. Only a few weeks ago my 22-year-old son had some mates over, and it was deflating to look at their faces when the topic of home ownership came up. That is why I am extremely pleased and grateful to be part of the LNP opposition that today has announced what I think is an incredible raft of policies in relation to home ownership. It is incredible to think that the opportunity for young Queenslanders today is less than it was for my generation. That is the reason I will continue with every fibre of my being to strive to not only hold my own seat but also work with every member on this side and our candidates to show Labor the door in '24.