




Speech By
Bart Mellish

MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

Record of Proceedings, 27 June 2025

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (10.39 am): This is a bad budget that does nothing for everyday Queenslanders. The LNP has somehow managed to end up with the worst of all worlds—more debt but less infrastructure—and the unprecedented hiding of budget blowouts in infrastructure, particularly transport infrastructure, is an indictment on this government. This is the least transparent transport budget in living memory. This budget will do nothing to alleviate congestion in South-East Queensland and right across the state.

QTRIP—the bible for road construction in Queensland—has been gutted and oversimplified to reduce accountability of this hapless minister and bumbling Treasurer. This government has not listed a single extra cent to its landmark Sunshine Coast rail, making its Wave announcement of just a few months ago a mockery. Even its Fresh Start document has more details in it than this latest QTRIP. So many important projects now have no funding allocated and no timeframe—projects like the Cairns western arterial, the Bruce Highway southern access into Cairns and Kuranda Range Road improvements. Even the Mooloolah River Interchange, which the minister bragged this Monday would have ‘long-awaited funds for early works to flow’, has no money in this budget. I went looking in the budget papers and found—

Project scope, cost and timing subject to further planning and negotiation with funding partners.

Zero dollars are listed in the budget. There is a one-day turnaround with its broken promises on the Sunshine Coast. Projects including the Linkfield Road overpass have been quietly pushed back and others, like crucial M1 upgrades, have completely dropped off the radar. This minister has also tried to get away with sneaking through cost escalations on the Centenary Motorway and the Coomera Connector in particular and has failed to fully fund the Cairns Common User Facility at the Port of Cairns. Remarkably, the Coomera Connector stage 1 project has increased over half a billion dollars in costs under this government’s watch without so much as a mention. Over \$1 billion in M1 upgrades have also been completely pushed off.

On Cross River Rail the budget papers show a deliberate go-slow on the most important public transport project in the state. Just on the Sunshine Coast, to give an example of a region, there is a frankly laughable description of the projects in the latest debasement of QTRIP in relation to its buses to Maroochydore project. To quote from the budget papers—

In delivering its election commitment, the government is providing additional funding for The Wave (Caloundra to Maroochydore) accelerated planning. The budgeted amount is not displayed as contracts have not been awarded.

That is actually a broken promise on top of a broken promise. Before the election it was trains all the way to Maroochydore and then after it was buses to Maroochydore. Now that is not even funded in the budget papers. What is the next downgrade? Donkeys to Maroochydore by 2032? E-scooters to the airport for the Olympics? The Wave has crashed, the Mooloolah River Interchange is stalled and Caloundra’s roads are stuck in reverse—all thanks to Premier Crisafulli’s broken promises.

In terms of the far north of the state, the Cairns Southern Access Corridor—a \$225 million project—has been pushed to 2032 and Kuranda Range repairs have been delayed. With regard to the Barron River bridge—the government got dragged kicking and screaming to this—it had to wait for Albo to make the first move and embarrass it into making a federal contribution on what is a wholly state road. With regard to the Cairns western arterial, all funding and timeframes have been completely stripped from the budget papers. The former member for Barron River fought hard for this project. The current member has given up already. With regard to the Captain Cook Highway Cairns CBD to Smithfield funding allocation, the timeframes have been completely stripped. Some \$359 million disappeared from the budget papers.

In terms of the Cairns Common User Facility at the port, funding in the budget is only \$387 million, not the \$826 million the minister announced this year was the cost of the project. There is a massive funding shortfall of over \$400 million on this government's own figures. Just last week we called for the LNP Crisafulli government to fully fund the common user facility. It has fallen on deaf ears. For the biggest infrastructure project that Cairns has seen since the international airport to get so little in this budget is a disgrace. Advance Cairns said last week that the Far North was turning away millions of dollars in business each day this project is delayed. Will the LNP now look to privatise the Cairns Common User Facility? We will have to wait and see.

In relation to Townsville, I read with interest the front page of the *Townsville Bulletin* yesterday with an article titled 'KAP deputy leader Nick Dametto expresses concern over lack of funding for Northern Beaches intersection in state budget'. The article stated—

A business case into a major road upgrade in Townsville's largest growth corridor has been overlooked in the state budget with northern suburbs residents to sit in gridlock for a little longer.

This refers to the project on North Townsville Road between Mount Low and Deeragun which has been cruelly overlooked in this budget. I commend the advocacy of the member for Hinchinbrook for this and other road projects in his patch and in Townsville more generally. When I was the minister I think I had more meetings about roads with the member than I did with some of my own colleagues and I know that he is a strong advocate for that area. In a similar vein, it is incredibly disappointing that the Gairloch floodway has been kicked into the long grass in this budget. Additionally, the Townsville eastern access rail corridor is now with no funding and timeframes listed. With regard to the Lansdown Eco-Industrial Precinct, funding and timeframe have been removed.

Going down the coast, this budget does not get any better. In the south-east we have seen the Coopers Plains level crossing slipped and now there is no money listed. On the Bribie Island bridge we have massive cost uncertainty. The stated cost range in the budget is between \$250 million and \$1 billion. That is a pretty big range. To quote from the budget papers—

Existing funding will complete design and begin early works.

That means it is not fully funded. That is a broken promise on the Bribie Island bridge. Caboolture to Bribie Island Road has been delayed at least a year from the budget papers. With regard to Burpengary to Caboolture Road and Aquatic Centre Drive to Graham Road, that has been removed completely from the budget.

Mr Ryan interjected.

Mr MELLISH: I take the member for Morayfield's interjections. I know that the member for Morayfield and the member for Kurwongbah pushed really hard for that project.

With regard to the Bruce Highway western alternative, there are no clear outcomes and no funding allocated following the proposed route change. The Albion train station upgrade has been cut from QTRIP completely. With regard to Caloundra Road and Nicklin Way, that has been cut from QTRIP. The David Low Way cycle facility has been cut from QTRIP. The Aspley bikeway from Zillmere Road to Cabbage Tree Creek has been cut from QTRIP.

With regard to the Bowen Bridge Road to Exhibition station upgrade rail pedestrian connection, the funding and timeframe have been removed. With regard to the Cannon Hill Shopping Centre upgraded bus station, timeframe and funding have been removed. The Chermside bus stop looks to be delayed at least a year. With regard to the Upper Mount Gravatt Busway Station, the funding and timeframe have been removed. The Bald Hills station park-and-ride expansion has completely gone. Notably, there is no money for the Story Bridge in this budget so, sadly, this Brisbane icon remains in limbo for another year, with the threats of tolling it by the Lord Mayor looming large. However, I might give the minister a pass on this because I note the Lord Mayor has not even written to him about it.

In terms of Wide Bay, with regard to Torbanlea Pialba Road there is cost uncertainty. On the Darling Downs, the Gatton Helidon Road has been delayed, with cost uncertainty. In the central west we now see the Outback Way Queensland Future Priorities with cost uncertainty and the funding amounts removed. Near Mackay we see uncertainty around the Peak Downs Highway—such crucial upgrades in that part of the world.

In terms of statewide maintenance, funding has been removed from statewide maintenance projects listed through QTRIP. Previous QTRIPs outlined in much detail the expenditure required for the upkeep of infrastructure across the state, but not this QTRIP. This is remarkable given how much of a song and dance this minister has made about maintenance funding in this very House. Remarkably and without precedent, this government has stripped from the budget papers many funding allocations which have not progressed to contract stage—in fact, almost all funding allocations which have not progressed to contract stage. This is an outrageous lack of transparency designed to save the minister embarrassment given his repeated claims of being able to deliver projects ‘on time and on budget’, as he has said many times in this House this year.

As a former transport minister I know that QTRIP would be a local MP’s best friend in arguing with your own minister for money, so what this QTRIP butchering has done is make the job of every backbencher on that side of the House immensely more difficult in holding their own government to account, because this minister has just given himself the tools to delay, to underfund and to cut all of their vital projects. Mark my words: many on that side of the House will not realise until January 2028 that their election commitments will not be built in time for the election. Their communities are going to be up in arms and they will be shown up for not delivering for their communities, often through no fault of their own but because of a transport minister, a premier and a treasurer who wanted to avoid scrutiny. ‘On time and on budget’ has just got a hell of a lot easier now that there are no timeframes and there is no budget.

Locally in my area, the Prince Charles Hospital has been pushed back by two years. The Cabbage Tree Creek Bikeway, which I mentioned, has been cut. There is no new money for the Gympie Road bypass tunnel listed in the budget papers. Money has been stripped away from the Gympie Road and Beams Road intersection. In 2020 there was an LNP commitment to an overpass there. They stripped that back to a much reduced version, which was a bandaid fix, but now the funding allocation has been removed. This is the first set of traffic lights you hit in Brisbane as you come in from the north. You have to go north of Gympie now until you hit the next set of traffic lights. There is even less clarity on what the government wants to do with this intersection. Also in my area, sadly, Craigslea State High School misses out in this budget. I had an election commitment of \$24 million. This was sadly not met.

This is not a boring budget; this is a bad budget by a bumbling Treasurer—a budget that blows away cost-of-living support for millions of Queenslanders. This is a budget that cuts billions from congestion-busting projects. This is a budget that will make people wait longer for medical treatment. This is a budget that does nothing to solve the shortage of social and affordable housing. This is a budget that fails to provide funding to support the growth of frontline staff. This is a budget that will make it harder for Queenslanders to get around. This is a budget that will make it harder for Queenslanders to get ahead. It is a very bad budget from a bumbling Treasurer.

Mrs Frecklington: You’re just making stuff up. There is a record spend in public housing, a record spend in cops, a record spend in health.

Mr MELLISH: I will not take a lecture from the member for Nanango who famously promised billions of dollars for the Bruce Highway and delivered, I think, \$20 million.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! Member for Nanango!

Mr MELLISH: This budget delivers more debt, less infrastructure and no real cost-of-living relief for Queenslanders.