




Speech By
Hon. Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL

 **Hon. BA MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (3.07 pm): That last address tells Queenslanders everything they need to know. The member for Ipswich spent more time talking about the LNP than she did about the bill. She spent more time talking about the LNP's commitments to service her electorate than her 10-year record in this place. There have been 10 years of Labor failure in Ipswich because of incompetent members like those opposite.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: Those opposite do not like it, but the reality is those opposite had 10 years to deliver for their communities and they failed. What did the former Palaszczuk and Miles Labor governments do about addressing the exits on the Cunningham Highway that the member for Ipswich now writes to me about? Nothing! Zero! Those opposite like to complain and make loud noises, but when they had the opportunity to deliver for their communities they failed. Contrast that with the LNP. We made very clear commitments to the people of Queensland. Our 100-day commitments were very clearly enunciated, and we have delivered on every single one of them, including—

Mr Nicholls: Including 50-cent fares.

Mr MICKELBERG: I will take that interjection from the health minister: including the LNP's permanent 50-cent fares, a tremendous LNP initiative we are proud to champion on this side, an initiative those opposite—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lister): I do not suppose the member for Buderim needs my protection, but I am struggling to hear with all of the interjections coming from my left-hand side. Tone them down, please. This is the final general warning I will give. I will start warning members on both sides under the standing orders from now on.

Mr MICKELBERG: I will finish my initial bit with this response: the LNP's permanent 50-cent fares is an initiative the LNP were proud to deliver within our first 100 days and something that Labor failed to do for 10 years. That tells you everything you need to know about the Labor Party.

Turning to the bill, I stand to address a matter of utmost importance for Queensland, that is, productivity, because it affects every single Queenslander every single day. The lack of productivity caused by the bungling, incompetence and sweetheart deals of the former Labor government has caused considerable cost blowouts and delays to critical road and transport infrastructure and projects right across Queensland. In fact, I dare say that had those opposite been more focused on delivering for Queenslanders then some of the projects the member for Ipswich just spoke about may have been delivered by the former government. Instead, we have had a decade of inaction and failure and a budget that has blown out to the point where we have a ratings outlook downgrade. All of that is on the member for Woodridge and his failure to manage the budget adequately.

Projects are over budget and delayed thanks to the CFMEU and the former government's cosy relationship with the CFMEU. Let us have a look at one in particular: Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3. The most recent blowout on that project is \$330 million and a 12-month delay. Those opposite signed off on that in September, before they went into caretaker mode. They did not tell anyone, mind you; they thought they would bury that. Unfortunately for those opposite, Queenslanders gave their trust to the LNP and we have been able to be open with Queenslanders about the fact that those opposite spent \$330 million of taxpayers' money subsidising the CFMEU on Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3. That is the reality of the Labor Party's record.

Let us have a look at Cross River Rail. A former transport minister who will remain unnamed promised Queenslanders that Cross River Rail would be delivered within a budget of \$5.4 billion and that it would be completed by last year, by 2024.

Mr O'Connor: Was it someone careless with their emails?

Mr MICKELBERG: Someone who was a little careless with their emails at times. The Crisafulli government made a commitment that we would reveal the true cost of Cross River Rail, which is what we have done. The real cost, the true cost, is \$17 billion—on a project that they said would cost \$5.4 billion. They said it would be completed by 2024, but I have been advised that it will likely not be finished until 2029. Why is Cross River Rail over budget and over time? It is because of sweetheart deals with the CFMEU.

Productivity on Cross River Rail has been through the floor for a long time. Last year, when those opposite were in power, more than 148 days on Cross River Rail were lost due to industrial action. That destroys productivity. Bear in mind, there are only about 300 work days in a year and we have lost about half of them due to industrial action on one of the biggest projects in the country and the biggest project in the state. That is Labor's record. It shows how they wilfully disregard taxpayers' dollars and their reckless abandonment whereby they simply strike sweetheart deals with their mates at the cost of Queenslanders.

The Crisafulli government, by contrast, have demonstrated that we are open for business and we are committed to restoring productivity. We are restoring productivity to get on with the job of delivering the road and transport infrastructure projects that Queenslanders need. The one thing that I agree with from the member for Ipswich's contribution is that Queenslanders do need better road and transport infrastructure than they got under the former Labor government. I absolutely agree that for 10 years Labor did not deliver for Queenslanders when it came to road and rail infrastructure.

Queenslanders are sick and tired of sitting in traffic because a road has not been upgraded or roadwork is going on for months or years longer than it should, simply because the former Labor government wanted to strike sweetheart deals with people like the CFMEU and their mates. We respect Queenslanders' hard-earned dollars and we respect taxpayers' dollars. We also respect their time. We want workers and tradies to be well paid—we absolutely want that—but we also want work to be delivered on time and on budget. Queenslanders deserve that.

Productivity in Queensland has sharply decreased since 2015. That is the record of those opposite. Productivity has decreased under them. Queenslanders demonstrated that they had lost trust in the former government and their ability to deliver projects on time and on budget. That is one of the reasons they entrusted the LNP with delivering good government—because those opposite could not do that and over time Queenslanders saw that.

Under the former government, productivity was a mere academic concept and, I would suggest, a political inconvenience. The reality is that productivity has real-world consequences for all Queenslanders, and the Treasurer adeptly described some of those consequences. Weak productivity growth led to lower economic growth, stagnant wages, higher unemployment and rising inflation. Had productivity growth remained at its pre-2018 average, Queensland's real per capita income would have been \$11,000 higher in 2023-24. The construction and the utilities sectors, in particular, suffered under Labor's mismanagement, experiencing little to no productivity growth in the last 30 years. The lack of productivity has cost Queenslanders in their back pocket and they remain wondering where the road and rail they so desperately need is.

The Queensland Productivity Commission Bill is a pivotal step in addressing these challenges. This is a bill that aims to re-establish the Queensland Productivity Commission—something that they killed over time because it suited them as it was politically inconvenient. The now Deputy Leader of the Opposition got rid of the Queensland productivity commission because it was politically inconvenient. Why did they get rid of the Queensland productivity commission? It is because they wanted to introduce sweetheart deals with the CFMEU, like BPIC. I am pretty sure the productivity commission would have had a view that that was not in the interests of productivity and delivering value to taxpayers for their hard-earned dollars.

One of the reasons we paused those BPIC provisions is that we knew they were destroying productivity on Queensland job sites. We are committed to restoring productivity because it costs home owners, renters and taxpayers every single day when the CFMEU and their sweetheart deal with the Labor Party destroys productivity. Treasury modelling has revealed that if BPICs continued in their former form Queenslanders would pay an additional seven per cent rent over the next five years and 22,000 homes would not be built in Queensland. Back in December we announced that it would not apply to new projects and those that had not yet reached the procurement stage. We are investing considerable taxpayers' dollars in new infrastructure here in Queensland and we want to receive value for money for taxpayers.

Those opposite are beholden to the CFMEU because they owe their political existence to the CFMEU. The Leader of the Opposition is installed by the CFMEU and many of those opposite are funded by the CFMEU. That is why the sweetheart deals with the CFMEU have been cut. This bill will end those processes because this bill will ensure that productivity in all government processes is the focus for government. The first measure will be to look at the construction industry, because that is one of the key areas where productivity has been destroyed. We want to see workers well paid, we want to see good conditions and we want to see productivity. That is what Queenslanders deserve and this bill delivers that.

I look forward to seeing the recommendations of the first Productivity Commission review. Unlike those opposite, we will be transparent and open. I hear the scare campaign with respect to the shadow treasurer's amendments. All I can say is that their record was to kill the productivity commission and bury its records.