




Speech By  
**Hon. Brent Mickelberg**

**MEMBER FOR BUDERIM**

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Record of Proceedings, 14 March 2025

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (SUPPLEMENTARY 2023-2024) BILL:  
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 **Hon. BA MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (3.54 pm): We knew that it was bad when we were in opposition, but I have to tell the House that it is even worse than we could have imagined. When we came in in November and we inherited the previous government's books, the red ink, the cost overruns and the unbudgeted failures of the Labor Party were in every single brief that I read. As we have opened those books for Queenslanders so they can see the true state of the budget—

**Mr McDonald:** We're letting the sun shine in.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** We are letting the sun shine in; I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. We are being open and transparent and we are uncovering Labor's deception—a deception to hide the cost of Cross River Rail, at \$17 billion; a deception to hide the cost of Labor's roads and transport infrastructure projects, at \$6.7 billion extra than Labor said they were going to cost. It is just the start of Labor's economic mismanagement.

For the Department of Transport and Main Roads, the unforeseen expenditure in 2023-24 was \$212 million, but that is on top of \$1.1 billion provided to the department in other appropriation bills outside of the budget. These supplementary appropriations seek about \$9 billion in additional funding that those opposite conveniently forgot to provision for. Part of it is that they forgot to provision; the other part is that they failed to deliver. Whether it is roads or the detention centre that is being built in the Lockyer Valley, those opposite were not able to deliver projects on time or on budget. As a consequence, Queenslanders have seen those projects delayed and we are paying more for them because of Labor's mismanagement.

Labor have never been able to keep a budget, not once. They demonstrated a wilful disregard for taxpayers' money from the day they walked into government in 2015, which was before my time in this place, and it is Queenslanders who pay the price. I would say that it was the former treasurer, now shadow minister Dick, who failed to keep the budget in order, but the truth is that it happened long before he came along. When Jackie Trad's long shadow was cast across this place, the budget was in a similar state of disrepair and it has only got worse in the entire time—

**Mr Lister:** It still casts across this place.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** I take the interjection from the member for Southern Downs. She still casts a shadow in this place as the puppetmaster of the current shadow cabinet. Jackie Trad is pulling the strings of the member for Waterford and the opposition leader. It is that legacy of mismanagement that we are trying to rectify now that we have a fresh start for Queensland in the Crisafulli LNP government.

What we saw from those opposite over the entire time they were in government—nearly 10 years—was a focus on announcements, but they would forget about the follow-up. They were all about the photo opportunity up-front, but they would forget about the follow-up. A case in point is the

Olympics. We are three years and seven months down the track and we still have nothing to show. That is Labor's record and Labor's legacy, and the budget reflects that. Net debt has never been higher, as a consequence of the Labor Party. We have had a rating outlook downgrade, as a consequence of the Labor Party's economic mismanagement. Queenslanders deserve better. It means we have less capacity to fund the things we need to fund here in Queensland.

We see such hollow rhetoric time and time again from those opposite. Let us take 50-cent fares, for example. The LNP's permanent 50-cent fares is a great initiative that we have been proud to fund through the budget process. The Labor Party like to claim credit for this great LNP initiative, but the truth is that when they had the opportunity to make 50-cent fares permanent during the 10 years they were in government they squibbed it. They never did it. In fact, they did a six-month trial with no money to continue it afterwards because they did not have the courage of their convictions to back in a worthy cost-of-living initiative that is making life better for Queensland commuters. We have taken on that 50-cent-fare initiative and we have made it permanent because we said we would and we recognise that it is providing cost-of-living relief for every single Queensland.

Labor's last budget back in June—this here is the last budget update for Labor—was a typical Labor budget of deficit and deception. Many Queenslanders are rightly asking questions. I note that the member for Hinchinbrook spoke about the local roads that still need to be upgraded and the member for Gregory spoke about the lack of maintenance. Others spoke about frequent and reliable public transport. Labor's failure to manage the budget has real consequences for Queenslanders every single day.

The reason Queenslanders are waiting for those critical services is that the budget has blown. We have huge delays in overspends. With regard to Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3, the most recent blowout is \$330 million because of the CFMEU tax. That is only 12 months after the last blowout which has seen the cost more than double from what Labor said it would. The construction cost of Cross River Rail started at \$5.4 billion; it is now \$17 billion. They said it was going to be finished in 2024; it will likely be 2029. That is Labor's record.

The reason Labor could not manage the budget is that they are hopelessly beholden to organisations like the CFMEU. The CFMEU's reign over the former government had a cost to Queenslanders every single day. I note that the member for Bancroft was formerly a member of the CFMEU. I do not think he is anymore. However, that tells you everything you need to know about the former Labor government—members of parliament installed by the CFMEU, and they ran roughshod over the Queensland budget as a consequence.

We have taken strong action to ensure that the stranglehold of the CFMEU over the former government is stopped. I say this all through the chair, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Whiting): You are on thin ice there, member for Buderim.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** Don't get me onto master fishermen, Mr Deputy Speaker. You do not want me to go there. We took strong action in pausing BPIC, the CFMEU tax, because it is destroying productivity on Queensland job sites, and we respect Queensland taxpayers' money. We will continue to take strong action to ensure productivity is restored in Queensland and that projects are delivered on time and on budget.

We want to ensure that tradies have good conditions and are paid well to complete road and transport infrastructure across Queensland, but the key word there is 'complete', and that is the bit that has been missing for far too long here in Queensland. Labor like to announce projects, but they never follow up and they never actually deliver. We will not just be announcing projects or planning projects; we will start projects and we will finish them, because ultimately that is what this is about. It is not about the photo op, it is about delivering the outcome for Queenslanders.

Budgets are just a reflection of the government's priorities. Labor, for too long, have run roughshod over Queensland taxpayers' money, with the wrong priorities. We have the right priorities. We will deliver a fresh start for Queensland. We are focused on delivering respect for taxpayers' money.

We have been left with a budget mess, but we will move forward in a mature, responsible, systematic way to get Queensland back on track. I have a clear focus on delivering projects on time and on budget, and I welcome that responsibility with which the Premier has entrusted me, an approach that was not evident in the ministers of the former government.

We will work with all levels of government to improve infrastructure and services right across the state. We have already proven that by securing an 80:20 funding split with the federal government on a \$9 billion package of road upgrades on the Bruce Highway. It is a shame that those opposite

abrogated their responsibility for fighting for Queensland when they decided to cave in to their Labor colleagues federally and accept 50:50 funding on federal roads. We did not accept the same situation and we have delivered 80:20 funding on the Bruce Highway in the first 100 days of government.

It will be remiss of me not to talk about the federal government's attack on Queensland today in slashing the GST distribution that Queensland will receive. This will make it harder for Queenslanders and for the Queensland government to deliver services that Queensland needs. Today, Queensland has been robbed of \$5 billion over the forward estimates. We have been robbed of it by the Labor Party federally and those opposite have been silent on it. My advice to those opposite is to pick up the phone to Albo. I can assure you that I will be raising this with my federal counterpart, Catherine King, and I will be telling her in no uncertain terms that we will not accept Queensland not getting its fair share, just as I did when we were fighting for 80:20 funding for the Bruce Highway. Every single member opposite needs to look their constituents in the face and say that they fought for Queensland's fair share. Robbing Queensland of \$5 billion in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, when we are trying to do more with less, is simply unacceptable. Queenslanders deserve better. I am sure Queenslanders will pass judgement on that when they go to the ballot box federally in a couple of weeks time.

We are focused on delivering mature, responsible and sensible government. We will restore respect for taxpayers' dollars. We will manage the budget in a responsible way, unlike those opposite, with the right priorities, and I look forward to being a member of the Crisafulli government delivering for every single Queenslanders.