




Speech By
Jessica Pugh

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

Record of Proceedings, 26 June 2025

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

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (10.38 pm): It is budget week, and it is also work experience week for a lot of state high school students around the state. I have had the wonderful Piya and Sahana here with me from Centenary State High School. It has been fantastic to see how bright these young women are who have been working alongside me this week for their work experience. It is clear to see that the former Labor government's strong investment in our state education system has been very well spent indeed. I have been absolutely blown away by these two clever and hardworking young ladies, as well as the lovely Jake who has come in from the Gap State High School. He is very industrious and he has teamed up with my young students on some of their tasks, including going through some of the budget papers this week. The students were absolutely gobsmacked by the volume in question time. They kept asking the member for Cooper and me over and over again when they were watching, 'Is it really like that in here every single day?' I was like, 'Yes, it is.' 'But why are you all yelling like that every single day? Don't you get tired of yelling about the same thing every day?' Apparently not. I still do not have a good answer for the students two days later. I just thought I would share that reflection with the House.

I am a 'glass half full' kind of person, so I am going to go first to the highlights of the budget. Firstly, seeing those 50-cent fares locked in is absolutely fabulous. I do not think I can convey to the House how transformative those fares were in the outer suburbs that I represent. When the Miles Labor government introduced them last year, the uptake in my community was significant, it was swift and the excitement was palpable. When I would doorknock, people would tell me story after story of how the 50-cent fares had reshaped their family budget. For a family of five in Riverhills to have one person commuting to the city each day now costs just \$5 a week when it had been close to \$10 a day. My hubby said it would have cost him about \$8.70 a day or so to catch the train before that. The 50-cent fares meant that a significant weekly saving could go towards groceries or the rent or mortgage. For some families it was the difference between being able to enrol kids in sport or not.

I am so pleased for my community and for every Queenslander to see these fares continuing. It has transformed the way we move around our city. People like Adam from Riverhills, who did not use to mind driving into the city—despite the congestion on the Jindalee bridge—now cannot be convinced to do anything but commute from one of our local train stations. From Darra train station, it is just 22 minutes on an express service into the city area. I must say that I do appreciate the Minister for Main Roads talking about the LNP's 50-cent fares. He is getting a little better every day at saying it with a straight face. Keep it up and I am sure by the end of the year you will have convinced yourself, Minister, but it is hard to be mad at him for being such a strong supporter of a good Labor policy.

Speaking of great Labor initiatives that the LNP is keen to take credit for, the aforementioned Jindalee bridge continues to move ahead in leaps and bounds. It is now at the point in construction where when I drive across there is literally something new happening every day. The bridge decking is being laid at a rate of knots this week as we sit in parliament. I have said it before and I will say it again:

this bridge is desperately needed. It is school holidays for our private schools this week so the congestion is lower everywhere around the city, it seems, but the Centenary Bridge at Jindalee. This is because it is a pinch point where it is impossible to merge safely due to the short on-ramp. Drivers cannot merge at a high enough speed to ensure the motorway continues to flow smoothly, so the whole Centenary Motorway behind this bridge grinds to a halt every morning, every afternoon and often on the weekends now too. I have spoken before about the stress this causes families in my community—parents trying to get their kids to school, to sport on the weekend and older residents trying to get to the Wesley for a morning medical appointment. It does not need to be like this. While the bridge is not the be-all and end-all, it is going to make things significantly better. I am so proud to have advocated for this project alongside my good friend Milton Dick, the Speaker of the federal parliament and the federal member for Oxley.

Now, another bit of Labor homework the LNP was very keen to borrow was the FairPlay vouchers. The FairPlay vouchers were something that many Labor members of this House campaigned hard on to see them kept in this year's budget. They have been rebranded as the Play On! vouchers. As I have said, there were clubs in my community that received over \$40,000 worth of vouchers for their winter sport. That is a massive chunk of annual playing fees. This money helps keep these clubs going, so it is a double win both for the parents of the players and for the community clubs they play for, so thank you to all of the locals who signed the petition to keep this fantastic initiative.

Speaking of fantastic local clubs getting money, it is also good to see the budget allocation for the Stormers' new lights in the regional highlights carve out under the Games On! Grassroots Infrastructure Program. I note from the budget papers there will be a \$300,000 commitment to get these lights for this fantastic club. I know that the Stormers' president, Belinda, and the whole club are absolutely thrilled.

I have looked closely at the budget. I have not been able to confirm any money for major projects in my schools that were in the various planning stages. I cannot see any money for the Corinda STEM lab in a specific individual line item or for the Centenary State High School hall. I stress that perhaps funding for these items is wrapped up in other more generalised items. I desperately hope that I am wrong and the money is, in fact, allocated in the budget. From what I can also see, Free Kindy did not get its own line item in the budget. In the SDS, reference is made to both Free Kindy and other items such as early childhood workforce initiatives.

One of the things I am most proud of—out of all of the things that we delivered as a Labor government—is Free Kindy, for so many reasons. Education is the great equaliser. It gives every child a real opportunity to succeed. What we now know is that the first five years of a child's education is absolutely vital to setting that young person up for success. If they do not get a good start in their early years of learning, it can be a significant impediment when they enter their latter primary school years. When they get to one of our great state schools, they deserve a teacher who is earning nation-leading wages. I want to take a moment to express solidarity for our hardworking teachers and our nurses, both of which are female-dominated professions. They work tirelessly to educate and care for us. They deserve nation-leading wages and conditions, and I call on the state government to come back to the table and make a better offer to our hardworking teachers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you might see that I am wearing the new state colour of Queensland because—apparently—now our branding changes with the government. On a serious note, the Queensland colour has, and always should be and will be, the state colour—maroon. It is not red; it is not blue; it is not green. Queensland is maroon, just like our great State of Origin team. It should not be subject to the government of the day changing the colour to their own side. The fact that this change has almost certainly cost money just adds insult to injury. I call on the government to come clean about the cost of this unnecessary change. This government, without consultation or a clear explanation, changed the state branding. Our maroon colours have seen us through countless political parties and changes of government, as it should. Our state colours are not about politics; it is about being a Queenslander. It is something that every single Queenslander should be proud of, no matter how they voted. I thank the locals who contacted me about this. Those opposite might say that it is not a serious issue, but it is seriously deranged to think that Queenslanders will accept spending taxpayers' money to politicise our state colour.

Let me quote from the Queensland government website, which is still up—now let's see for how long—on 13 November 2003, the Governor in Council officially named maroon as Queensland's state colour. This announcement was made as a result of a long-held informal tradition of using maroon to represent Queensland. Maroon has traditionally been associated with Queensland's sport—the Brisbane Broncos, the Brisbane Lions. The sporting clubs both use shades of maroon for their team colours in combination with gold for the Broncos and blue and gold for the Lions. While the Governor elected a particular shade of maroon, Queenslanders continue to wear all shades of maroon at sporting

and other events to show the spirit of the state. Maroon is the spirit of the state. I cannot imagine anyone who loves this state as much as I do adopting the LNP blue anytime soon. Our state colour needs to be beyond politics. I know my community feels the same.

I know that for people in my community and right across Queensland the energy rebates we had in last year's budget were a significant relief for their family budgets. Likewise, not having the car rego rebates in the budget is going to hurt working people and families in outer suburbs like Mount Ommaney. I got a text from a friend today with their appraisal of the budget. They said the LNP were essentially selling the budget as 'all the stuff you like from Labor but we'll tell you that we're worried about the cost'. They cannot have it both ways. Our side of the House are proud of our coal royalties. We are proud of what they delivered for Queensland. We are proud of our 50-cent fares, our FairPlay vouchers and our free kindy. Those decisions were made on principle. They were the right call.

The Treasurer wants us to think that this is a boring budget, but for my community there is nothing boring about budgets that affect people's everyday lives, and I know that is a sentiment I share with the member for Keppel, who made the same observation earlier. Budgets have the power to be transformative. People who think of their budgets as boring lack vision and a plan for our great state. It is actually really concerning to hear it referred to that way. To people in my community this budget is not boring; it has the potential to seriously impact their lives. To see those key cost-of-living measures not in there is so disappointing to people in my community. They will actually be heartbroken and crestfallen. That is not boring to them; that could seriously impact their everyday lives. I am really disappointed to see some of those measures have not been included in the budget and I know that my community is not alone in that. There will be communities right across Queensland who will be deeply disappointed to see key infrastructure has not made it into this budget and those cost-of-living measures also have not made it into this budget. It is absolutely inaccurate to say it is boring. Choices have been made and in many cases, unfortunately, they are the wrong choices for Queensland.