




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGEES

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

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (5.16 pm): Budgets are always about what a government values. Far more than mere numbers on a balance sheet, budgets are ultimately a statement of values and hopefully of vision, and they are always about people. The Treasurer said of his first LNP budget that it is a budget that you would call boring and that budgets should be boring, but I disagree. I want to acknowledge the budget reply speech that the opposition leader, Steven Miles, delivered today. It was anything but boring. It spoke of the values, the things and the people that we, as the Labor Party and the Labor opposition, value. It was a speech about Queenslanders, about what they are telling us they value and about what they have told us they need.

This budget falls short of those values and those needs. It does not speak to a vision for Queensland but rather continues the same tone that we see in here each and every sitting day: attacking the Labor Party, talking about the Labor Party, obsessing about the Labor Party, making nasty personal attacks on members of the opposition, and politicised reviews and petty pointscore. It used to be enough to win an election. Those opposite are so entrenched in combative opposition thinking and their own political bitterness that they cannot rise to the great privilege and challenge of governing and thinking about Queenslanders. If they are not obsessing about the Labor Party, they are focused on 'bluwashing' the state in LNP colours. They are as bad as the Schinner city council. Blue and yellow have never been Queensland colours and they never will be.

Before the election last October, the now LNP government promised the people of Queensland so much more than what they have given them in this budget. The LNP promised cost-of-living relief. They promised lower energy bills. They promised lower debt. They promised respect for taxpayers' money. They promised to deliver projects on time and on budget. However, the budget does not deliver on those promises. For all their chest beating and protestations before the election about respecting taxpayers' money, holding ministers to account, delivering projects on time and on budget and that when they say something it means something, this budget is based on hot air.

Debt is not lower; it is higher. While this government would like Queensland to believe the narrative that Labor hid costs and did not budget for key infrastructure and projects, we all know what the independent ratings agencies say: the narrative is political pointscore. Those opposite inflated the debt position for political pointscore, damaging the state's credit rating in the process. Debt is not lower; it is higher. Those opposite should have the courage of their convictions. If they think it needs to be higher, they should say that, own it, explain it and respect the intelligence of Queenslanders to make up their own mind about it. Do not sell them a con job.

Those opposite promised cost-of-living relief. This was the greatest con of all. Queenslanders continue to raise cost of living as their No. 1 concern. They are struggling. The Premier acknowledged before the election that energy rebates were critical to helping Queensland families keep their heads

above water. That has not changed, but the Premier's commitment has. We were told energy bills would fall, but instead they are projected to increase, with no energy rebate to help ease the burden for most families.

This budget was the government's moment to show up for everyday Queenslanders, like they promised, and to put real relief on the table, but they failed to do that. The budget includes a \$100 payment to families of a primary school student. I welcome that initiative. I know that will help my local families, and they will welcome it. I also acknowledge that the government heard the opposition's call to keep FairPlay vouchers. They make a big difference to families and clubs across my electorate. It will not supplement—not even close—the increases in an average Queensland family's costs, though. They are facing: rising energy costs, most with no rebate; higher rego costs; the ever skyrocketing price of food; and, for home owners across my electorate, an increase in their rates bill but a reduction in services from the Brisbane City Council. As I said, this first budget was the Crisafulli LNP government's opportunity to ease the pressure on families. They failed that test.

In respect of my shadow portfolio responsibilities, I want to acknowledge the committed funds to increase ranger numbers. This is an important investment, and I warmly welcome it. Our park rangers are on the front lines every day, managing fire risks, protecting wildlife, keeping visitors safe and preserving some of the most precious places on earth. Rangers are not just caretakers; they are educators, protectors and the backbone of our conservation efforts. Walking with and learning from Queensland rangers in some of the most remote areas of our great state will always be one of my fondest memories of when I was the environment minister.

Labor worked hard to restore ranger numbers and DES staff following the significant cuts made by the last LNP government, and I am genuinely relieved to see this government is taking a different path. I also acknowledge the funding committed to our wildlife hospitals. These hospitals are vital to supporting sick and injured wildlife, and in particular to supporting the health of our koala population. They do a marvellous job. They deserve this funding, and I know they will put it to critical use. I thank them for their service to conservation.

It is far from all positive. Before the election, Queenslanders were told the Environmental Defenders Office would continue to be funded. That was not true. No funding has been provided and that is a very clear broken promise.

A government member: No funding was in the budget. If Labor wanted them to stay funded, where was their commitment?

Mrs Frecklington: Any money in the budget?

Ms LINARD: I take the interjections. It is to argue semantics that you have chosen not to continue funding an agency that had an email and a commitment from the Premier that their funding would continue. It is disingenuous to come in here and say political lines like, 'You hadn't funded it so we couldn't continue it.'

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Ms LINARD: You are the government. The Premier supported emissions reduction targets, but this budget makes no serious commitment to climate action. I have said it before in this House, and I will say it again: this government have no real ambition for climate action or for the conservation of Queensland's environment. Their first budget makes that clear. They are too engaged in culture wars or desperately trying to avoid them internally. I hear the Premier has tasked the new former environment minister—

An honourable member: Recycled environment minister.

Ms LINARD: I am not going to say 'recycled'. He has not been recycled. 'New former' is far more respectful. I genuinely wish the new former environment minister very well.

Those opposite are not genuine about increasing our publicly protected area estate or committed to a strong renewable pathway—the only pathway to reduce emissions and act on climate. The uncomfortable truth of climate change is that there is not just a human and environmental cost to not acting; there is also an economic one. While those opposite only ever raise the costs associated with reducing emissions, the costs of inaction are far greater.

The budget includes \$39.6 million of funding to expand our protected areas. I surmise—and stakeholders tell me—that is the remaining balance of Labor's historic \$262.5 million investment in expanding protected areas. While I am grateful the LNP is handing in our homework, Queensland's environment needs an equal level of commitment from the LNP. The Treasurer said in his speech that the LNP government will deliver more protected areas in one term than the former government did in a decade, and I have heard members repeat that line in this place. Given we delivered at least 1.23 million hectares, they will need to add at least 307,500 hectares each year this term.

In his speech, the Treasurer went on to spruik the nearly 9,000 hectares they have added to national parks and nature refuges, which was announced to great fanfare by the Premier and the environment minister on Queensland Environment Day. Of course, 90 per cent of those additions were Labor's homework. Labor did those. It is pretty disingenuous to claim them whilst criticising us for the land that we actually put into the publicly protected area estate and saying that we did not do enough but at least we started. I calculate that, of the 8,700 hectares they claimed on that day, 2,000 are actually theirs so they have 305,000 hectares to go this year to make their commitment.

I want to comment now on young Queenslanders. I spend a lot of time listening to young Queenslanders—I always have and I always will. The future is theirs. Young Queenslanders are concerned, first and foremost, about cost of living, about housing, about job prospects, about the perception of young people being cultivated in public discourse and about climate action. This budget does not offer them much. Young Queenslanders hoping to kickstart their careers through TAFE are now met, as the Leader of the Opposition said this morning, with a website that tells them that free TAFE has been exhausted under this LNP government.

For those young people dreaming of owning their first home, the government's flagship housing policy, while a Labor initiative, is now weaker and more exclusive. With around 25,000 Queenslanders entering the housing market each year, it is estimated this so-called supercharged first home owner grant will help just one per cent of aspiring entrants. That is not reform; that is a headline.

I have already touched on the lack of action in this budget for climate action and cost-of-living relief. While I know young people will welcome the government retaining Labor's 50-cent fares, the cost of car rego and electricity bills on top of ever-rising rent and groceries is generally anxiety inducing for these young people. They need real cost-of-living relief.

I turn now to my beloved community of Nudgee. I acknowledge and welcome the two LNP election commitments that have been honoured in my electorate that support two of our fantastic sporting clubs—the North Star Football Club and North Brisbane Rugby Club. I have always said to my community, 'I don't care where the money comes from. I just want to see them reach their goals.' I do want to acknowledge my former LNP opponent, Robert Wilson. Anyone here who has met Robert would know that he is a delightful human being. It was a rough first run for Robert. I know that he will be happy that these clubs will get these funds—I am certainly happy and so are my clubs. The LNP threw a lot of money at my electorate, made false claims against me and ran scare campaigns. I think I was singularly responsible for the increased price of groceries—I am not sure how they worked that out! Robert is a good guy and in politics it is always appreciated to have a respectful political opponent. I am glad to see the money will go to those clubs. They do play an important role and they will be so excited.

I thank the sports minister. I have written to him. I was prepared for him to come back and say, 'No. It was an LNP election commitment. They have elected you so you cannot have it.' He did write a handwritten note that they are getting that money. There should be things above politics. It is so combative in here. It is not something that I enjoy. I am sure there are a lot of other members who do not, but we all fight for our communities. I am glad to see that money and I will give credit where credit is due.

I also want to acknowledge that there is \$52 million in the budget for the Boondall Police Station. I have absolutely no idea what it is for. I do not have any information. I do hope the police minister will tell me. I know that my OIC Greg—'Happy'—as we call him, will be genuinely happy with this announcement. My local officers at Boondall and Hendra know I think the world of them. I have always supported them. If there is anything they need I have always supported them and their teams. They are just wonderful, as are all our frontline workers and public servants who serve my great community of Nudgee.

I am disappointed not to see any infrastructure improvements for my local schools. They may be there, but I cannot see them in the budget. Nudgee has always had a lot of genuine investment across all of my 12 train stations and local schools. I cannot see that in this budget. It is a budget that does not deliver for Nudgee what the Labor government always has. Nudgee families continue to raise the No. 1 issue for them—genuine cost-of-living relief. They are struggling. It will be disappointing for them that they are not going to have the same level of support. Most importantly, free kindy, electricity rebates, fairer public transport fares and energy bill support have made a massive difference to my local community.

In the time remaining, I know this is very much breaking with convention because my job is to stand here—or some people would assume—and say all negative things about the budget. As people know, I have not done that. I have definitely given credit where credit is due and raised the issues that I do have. On a personal note, I have worked for three treasurers. Putting a budget together as a staffer

is exhausting. It is all day. It is all night. You go cross-eyed with the numbers. I really like the Treasurer on a personal level. I have known him for a long time. He is a good human being. I do not like his budget—that is clear—but he is a good human being. I acknowledge that and that he and his staff would be exhausted. I am going to finish on a positive note. Let it be heard in this parliament. Thank you very much.