




Speech By
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Record of Proceedings, 27 June 2025

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

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (3.18 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate of the Appropriation Bill 2025, the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2025 and the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. The LNP Treasurer has handed down his first blue budget and unfortunately it is full of broken promises. Queenslanders were promised relief, a fresh start and a government committed to delivering for families doing it tough, but what we have seen is anything but that.

Government members interjected.

Mr RUSSO: Just listen. Before I go into discussion about the budget I want to acknowledge two infrastructure projects in my electorate. Those two projects that I lobbied for were delivered under the Labor government.

The first project I want to speak about is the Boundary Road level crossing at Coopers Plains. In the 2024-25 QTRIP released by the previous Labor government in our budget, the funding breakdown for this project was clearly outlined, including the contributions from the Australian government, Queensland government and local government. In the 2025-26 QTRIP, there is no funding listed for this project at all. While I understand the commercial reasons behind removing specific funding amounts from QTRIP, the community deserves transparency on how key infrastructure projects are progressing. From my conversations with the department, I understand that funding allocated in 2024-25 has been used to progress construction of the overpass. All necessary property resumptions have been completed, and I have been advised the next steps involve demolition of existing buildings and completion of underground works before the project moves to contract.

I want to take a moment to recognise the residents and small business owners affected by these resumptions. Many have faced difficult, life-altering decisions. Some have chosen early retirement while others, like the local vet, have successfully relocated their practices—in this case, to Sunnybank Hills. I commend their resilience, cooperation and the grace with which they navigated this process. However, I am genuinely concerned that this site may now be left to languish, with boarded-up buildings and no visible progress.

The budget process must be fair and transparent. Major infrastructure projects like this one should be clearly listed somewhere in the budget papers so that elected representatives—and the communities we serve—can track their status and next steps. Removing this information from QTRIP without an alternative update makes it impossible for people to provide the community with the reassurance it deserves. This project has been long promised—for over 40 years—and, with the Brisbane 2032 Olympic Games on the horizon, failing to complete this major transport corridor would be an embarrassment. Boundary Road is one of our city's key east-west links, with direct access to the Gateway Motorway, and north-west for access to Ipswich and beyond and it simply cannot be left in limbo. Now it is time for the government to honour the investment, continue the momentum and deliver the infrastructure that this community has been waiting for and rightly deserves.

The second update I want to talk about is the QEII Hospital expansion project, which appears to be progressing on schedule. This \$619 million hospital expansion has already completed some of its objectives, including a 28-bed medical ward and an allied health and ambulatory care services building. In late 2024 two new projects were started—a brand new car park and a new clinical building. I recently had the pleasure of attending the naming ceremonies for the four cranes currently on the site, with one of them, as I have spoken about in this House previously, being named after Stan Bellas—one of the most remarkable volunteers I have had the pleasure to know. Stan has been volunteering at the QEII Hospital for more than 25 years. Some constituents have raised concerns about traffic congestion during the ongoing works, and I am actively engaging with both local residents and Brisbane City Council to ensure parking restrictions are enforced.

I also want to acknowledge the inclusion of the \$30 million upgrade to the Upper Mount Gravatt police facility in the state budget. This facility serves several suburbs within my electorate and it is important that members of the Queensland police force have proper facilities to operate in.

Now I will turn back to the rest of the disappointing budget. The debt is higher than promised, infrastructure projects have been delayed and millions of Queensland families will miss out on much needed cost-of-living relief. Instead of a fresh start, this budget represents a false start for those who are struggling the most. Right now in Brisbane it is estimated that around 1,377 people are experiencing homelessness and, on top of that, we face an unmet housing need of over 5,600 dwellings. These are not just numbers; these are people without a safe place to sleep, families struggling to make ends meet and young people with nowhere to go, and yet this budget does nothing to address the growing crisis in social and affordable housing here in Queensland. It is a missed opportunity and it is Queenslanders who pay the price.

First home buyers have been hit the hardest by this budget. The so-called Boost to Buy scheme has been capped at just 1,000 places. To make matters worse, it is restricted to homes valued at under \$1 million which locks out many would-be home owners, especially in parts of South-East Queensland. The median dwelling price in Brisbane now sits at appropriately \$918,000 as of May 2025. This government's policies are leaving many first home buyers in the dust, unable to access a basic homeownership dream.

The government claims to be taking action on waste, capping non-frontline senior executive public servant numbers until 2028 and imposing a hiring freeze to save \$18 million over four years. It is also promising cuts in consultant spending by setting up its own Queensland government services organisation. While cutting back on waste is important, the question remains: will these savings translate into meaningful benefits for the people of Queensland, or are we just seeing a political move to paint the budget as 'tough on waste' without real impacts?

I will now move on to another Labor initiative, and that is the mental health levy that was introduced by the Labor government in 2022-23. I also acknowledge the significant concerns raised by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists in Queensland. It has made it clear that the state government's 2025-26 budget fails to address the serious shortfalls in Queensland's mental health system—this, despite the government having access to significant funds through the mental health levy. According to the college, there is an urgent need for greater investment in our mental health workforce as well as infrastructure like hospital beds and community-based mental health services. Queenslanders deserve transparency. The government must clearly show where every dollar from the mental health levy is going and ensure that funding is directed where it is truly needed—into more beds, better community services and, most importantly, into building and supporting a stronger mental health workforce.

It was always a given that the government would recommit to its pledge to spend \$7.1 billion on Olympic Games venues, including the Victoria Park stadium. This budget reaffirms that promise, with the delivery of minor venues like the Sunshine Coast Stadium, the Barlow Park stadium in Cairns and the Moreton Bay Indoor Sports Centre.

I will now move on to another aspect of the key deliverables that were spoken about by the Treasurer in the budget, and that is supporting aspiring teachers and continuing programs to boost Queensland's teacher workforce and, as part of the More Teachers, Better Education commitment, provide more opportunities for teachers and teacher aides to access professional development in behaviour management, inclusive education, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics. If the government is serious about supporting aspiring teachers and continuing programs to boost Queensland's teaching workforce as part of the More Teachers, Better Education commitment, why does the LNP government tell teachers that a three per cent increase starting in July, with an additional 2.5 per cent rise in each of the following two years, is all they are worth? This barely exceeds the current

official inflation rate of 2.4 per cent and falls well short of addressing the actual rapidly rising living costs workers are facing. Moreover, the proposal would also eliminate the cost-of-living adjustment payments that were promised under the 2022 agreement. If this government is serious about teacher retention, pay them what they are worth. If this government is serious about attracting teachers to start a career in teaching, pay them what they are worth.

The LNP's promise to reduce total debt looks increasingly unlikely. In fact, their own Mid-Year Fiscal and Economic Review budget update from January 2025 predicted that Queensland's total debt would hit \$217.8 billion by 2027-28. The current budget claims that under the LNP total debt will be \$190.4 billion by 2027-28, but let us be clear: Labor's final budget had that same debt figure at \$172 billion. Even more concerning, the budget papers themselves warn of a long-term deterioration in Queensland's fiscal position which could lead to heightened interest payments in the foreseeable future. While they are touting reduced debt, it is clear that the LNP government's fiscal approach is not addressing the long-term fiscal challenges.

Under 'Whole-of-government measures', the budget includes a \$250 million commitment to the Games On! grassroots infrastructure program. This funding will go towards supporting grassroots sporting clubs and schools, with the goal of upgrading fields, pitches, courts, clubhouses and other key sporting facilities. However, when reviewing the list of recipients for the Games On! program, my community is disappointed to find that no legacy projects are included. If the LNP is genuinely concerned about youth crime, I would expect them to invest in projects that provide young people with positive spaces for sports and recreation. For example, in my electorate, there is a significant shortage of basketball facilities.

I want to highlight a proposal from Robertson State School in my electorate, where they have submitted a 3D plan for a much needed multipurpose sports centre. This facility would not only benefit the school but also serve the wider Toohey community. This facility is not just about providing a place for children to play sports like basketball; it is about creating a lasting legacy. It would also foster genuine multiculturalism and encourage a strong sense of identity and belonging for future generations. This is the kind of investment in community infrastructure that truly strengthens our society. I would like to understand why this infrastructure proposal was rejected so quickly by the Minister for Education and the Arts. Was it not eligible for funding under the Games On! grassroots infrastructure program or the \$100 million commitment to build and upgrade school sports infrastructure and provide sports equipment to increase student participation in sports across all Queensland schools? This is exactly what the proposed multipurpose sports centre at Robertson would do. This project could create an incredible legacy for my community.

In the 2024-2025 budget, the former Labor government committed \$25 million as part of the broader \$80 million Queensland Battery Industry Strategy implementation, yet I cannot find any mention of this commitment in the current LNP budget. If the LNP is abandoning this strategy, this is not just a case of shifting priorities; it is a step backwards. By walking away, the LNP risk undermining sovereign manufacturing and jeopardising the future of a growing industry that holds immense potential to power Queensland's economic and energy future. I ask the government: what has happened to the Queensland Battery Industry Strategy?