




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 26 June 2025

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

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (5.43 pm): Even though inflation is down from post-COVID-19 highs and there has been some interest rate relief, at grassroots the reality is that we have overburdened not-for-profits and volunteers delivering everything from food and accommodation through to counselling and haircuts at ever-increasing rates to struggling families. The modest continuation of the \$200 Play On! vouchers, \$100 Back to School Boost for primary school students—there are concerns raised that it is not available for high school students—and a CPI increase to the power rebate is all we can find so far. I do look forward to estimates time when we can dig a little deeper into that, as I feel it is nowhere near enough to address what is being experienced on the ground, including around home insecurity.

With the population expected to grow about 1½ per cent per year—that is 30 per cent over the next 20 years—an Olympic Games and a push to double visitations, Queensland requires much more in everything: houses; infrastructure including roads, water and power; and subsidisations and supports. Growth at these rates will deliver impacts to lifestyle, the environment and our desirability as a destination.

The reference to one million new homes by 2044 and 53,500 new social homes misses the very real issue of our existing low-income working families who are not eligible for government housing and can only access up to \$500,000 from the banks to purchase one. Hence, we need genuine affordable housing for them. Incentives such as removal of stamp duty on new builds and first home buyer schemes as announced do nothing to address their plight as there are no homes available in that \$500,000 price range.

On the good news front, there is extra funding for QPWS. While it is roughly only a third of what has been sought, it is a welcomed increase. However, with a half a billion dollars to boost tourism through Destination 2045, the impacts of this may swamp any benefits of this increase. Hence, monitoring is needed.

The extra \$76 million over six years for DFV responses and \$30 million for the Womensline and Mensline is a positive, and I look forward to finding extra grants for grassroots projects in prevention, as we have proven local initiatives that need funding.

An extra \$225 million for 1,600 extra police and \$150 million for new and replacement equipment such as body cams and tactical vests is very welcomed. However, I am still trying to figure out how the gaps left by the various forms of leave, including long service leave and leave for those suffering PTSD, will be addressed. We need to see both the new allocation modelling and the analysis of the impact 1,600 new recruits will have.

Welcomed is the \$345 million for youth rehabilitation programs and \$225 million, and \$50 million per annum ongoing, for the 12-month post-release rehabilitation support, as recommended in the YJ report. However, from my understanding—hopefully someone can correct me if I am wrong—this would need to be court ordered. This could mean that not all would participate in this needed rehabilitation.

That \$40 million has been allocated to MoB is great news, as I can say after visiting them during the YJ inquiry that their organisation and success rate are outstanding. Calling these 'crime prevention schools' instead of 'pathway colleges' may be in itself a detractor from participation if this is voluntary. Unfortunately, so far we have not been able to find where the other identified needs to address youth offending are located, including lowering the threshold for a declaration, extension of the vehicle immobiliser subsidy scheme and financial support to victims of nonviolent crime. However, we will keep digging.

On the health front, the \$6.5 billion over four years to cut the elective surgery waitlist and provide additional paramedics and ambulances is well done. With the minister stating that these funds are for both the public and the private sector, may the lease for the Noosa Private Hospital be finalised so that the expansion of the emergency department and associated services can get underway. This will also reduce ramping at surrounding hospitals.

Nowhere to be found—and I say again that the format of budget papers needs to be reviewed—are desperately needed increases for mental health. The \$125 million for a modest expansion of facilities, including six beds for step-up step-down and an initiative to support suicide prevention, is nowhere near enough. Noosa needs a Better Care Together program team, access to an eating disorder facility and a police acute care emergency responder, as would many other communities.

I turn to our small businesses, who sought relief of tape and taxes. Through the 'small business first' agenda, there is \$130 million for red-tape reduction and services including financial counsellors; however, any changes to taxation were modest, with \$58 million to provide a 12-month extension to the payroll tax rebate for apprentice and trainee wages and with payroll tax exemptions for medical practitioners remaining. Disappointingly, we have not seen any change in the land tax rates, which have not been updated in 16 years, regardless of land values exploding, leading to increases flowing down to tenants.

I will move onto education, with \$220 million for more teachers, TAs and behavioural support specialists. Given the number leaving the profession for the many reasons that have been outlined over the years, including the behaviour of students and parents, the shortage of alternate schooling for disengaged students and endless administrative tasks, the commitments the government has made are welcome; however, they will need to be extended further to deliver what is sought. With a waitlist in my own community for alternate schooling, I hope there may be funds available when we come to the minister with a proposal to address this. For our little ones, \$500 million to continue free kindy and programs that support access to services is very welcomed.

I will now address the specifics in relation to Noosa, where there are positives, negatives and questions. The funds required for the upgrade of Lake Macdonald have been confirmed, with the expenditure over the forward accounts now at nearly half a billion dollars to ensure safety into the future. Thank you. There is nearly a million dollars for a new pedestrian crossing in Pomona, with construction scheduled for 2026-27. Again that is welcomed; however, I still cannot understand why it cannot be done right now. Within the budget snapshot there is a mention of the commencement of the Tewantin bypass even though it had already commenced, with stage 1 completed in 2022. The \$8.5 million committed to fast-track the detailed design of the remaining stages is in QTRIP, along with the unhappy news of construction not beginning until 2028-29; however, there was no mention of the \$30 million election promise towards that construction. There needs to be some clarity on this to avoid the commitment being seen as carrot dangling. I have requested a meeting with Noosa Shire Council and TMR to understand why it will take three years. The construction of new boat infrastructure in Noosa made it onto QTRIP without dollar amounts, although government has reiterated their \$2.5 million commitment.

I will now turn to the \$36 million allocated for a new Sunshine Coast waterways authority. This is confusing, as it has never been raised as something Noosa sought, so without any specifics we are running blind. Government must provide details, including why this authority is needed, what it will do and why Noosa was included. Intensive community consultation needs to be undertaken, as this has not occurred even with Noosa Shire Council, which may be impacted the most based on how other waterways authorities operate. Whilst I am on waterways, \$15 million over three years for the Keeping Our Waterways Safe/War on Wrecks program is not enough, especially with the rollout of new legislation in the Noosa pilot. That will eventually be rolled out into other waterways and could lead to more vessels that require removal.

Stage 1 of the Beerburrum to Nambour rail upgrade has increased to \$285 million, yet nowhere is there any mention of a rail shuttle—which has been needed for years—from Gympie to connect with the Nambour timetable. As I have mentioned previously, we need both the infrastructure and services to accommodate current and future demand.

There is good news for our sports: \$15,000 for Noosa Little Athletics; \$25,000 for Noosa Pirates Rugby League Football Club; \$44,000 for Tewantin Noosa Tennis Club; and \$500,000 for the Cooroy sports complex lighting upgrade. I know members will say it is outside the Noosa electorate however; many of my constituents use that facility. Noosa Shire Council received \$1 million for the all-abilities toilet facility for Gympie Terrace; however, nowhere to be found are any funds for a new Noosa Tigers change room, Dolphins Rugby Union Club redevelopment or council's aquatic centre and multi-purpose facility although, as I said, I will keep hunting.

A big disappointment was the lack of construction funding for the advanced manufacturing centre facility at Sunshine Beach State High School. I can only hope this has been a typo, as we have students missing out on essential certification for the many jobs in this booming industry. Before you know it, all of our body parts will be 3D printed! We continue to advocate that funds from the decommissioned Tewantin TAFE be reinvested into the drafted Noosa learning hub. Given that we have had neither TAFE nor a university campus since their closure—or good public transport—this hub is essential. I look forward to updates on the site as—with some dollars from government—this could potentially provide a base for the hub.

Sadly, there is no indication of fairer funding models for our palliative care hospices. Having fought for our Katie Rose hospice over the years, including for government to fund 50 per cent of nursing costs instead of the current 25 per cent, and with the National Palliative Care Strategy coming to an end this year, may government see the importance of our community models and increase this funding. It is vastly more economical than a hospital bed.

In conclusion, as I have said during previous budget debates, this is one of the toughest jobs of government. I thank the Treasurer and all involved as, regardless of what it contains and who hands it down, it will never be enough until we change how we operate, which currently is unsustainable. Otherwise, we would not have to keep seeking rebates and vouchers for living essentials. Yes, there are good announcements that are appreciated; however, the ones missing in action are concerning. Existing initiatives rebranded as new are confusing. Commitments that do not have community or stakeholder endorsement, such as the mention of a safe night precinct for Hastings Street in the Sunshine Coast snapshot, are understandably questionable. I hope that some of the confusion may be cleared up and items so far not unearthed are revealed during estimates.

Regardless of efforts by the opposition over the past seven years—including the now government—to reform the estimates process, it currently looks to be the same, with chairs who are still government members. This is not a reflection on the Speaker or Deputy Speaker; it is just not what has been requested over the years.