




Speech By
Trevor Watts

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Record of Proceedings, 27 June 2025

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

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (6.19 pm): I rise to make my contribution on the budget. I would like to thank both the Premier, David Crisafulli, and my mate from the south side, the Treasurer, David Janetzki, for delivering for the people of Toowoomba. I have always been a strong local voice representing the people of Toowoomba, trying to make sure we get the things that we need delivered.

The first one in this budget, and the most important one, is a one-campus hospital. What was being proposed was going to be of no use to the people of Toowoomba. In fact it was going to cost \$300 million a year extra to operate two separate campuses and it would have delivered a poor service. With \$18.5 billion worth of funding for the Hospital Rescue Plan, the establishment of the single campus in Toowoomba at Baillie Henderson is a coup for our community. It delivers 538 beds, which is an increase of 118. That will help deal with both ambulance ramping and getting our waitlist down. This state-of-the-art healthcare facility has been desperately needed for a long time.

There is a \$1.8 billion investment in Surgery Connect. That means pensioners in Toowoomba will not have to be put on buses to get their eyes looked after in Ipswich or Brisbane, which is what has been happening. I appreciate Surgery Connect and I encourage local ophthalmologists to apply for it.

A second connection between Boundary Street and the growing community to our north in Highfields is desperately needed. It was completely botched by those opposite without consultation; it was not done properly. We are going to go back and revisit that business case. We need to get a connection road across to Boundary Street, but first we need to look at the road network locally and work out how it can be expanded so it can cope with the traffic that will be there in the long term. That is part of what is in this budget and that is great.

Talking of road safety upgrades, we will be trying to make it safer for kids around primary schools in Mount Lofty, Highfields, Newtown and Wilsonton. A lot of people here may not realise that we get a fair bit of fog at different times of the year in Toowoomba, and those schools have some particular issues with that. There is also a junction at Stuart Street that is not good for some of the senior school students going into Toowoomba State High School as they are learning to drive. It is particularly dangerous and I have seen a number of accidents there in the last year. I look forward to that being addressed.

The Toowoomba Sports Ground is not going to be an Olympic venue; it is going to be the Equestrian Centre of Excellence, and this budget allocates some of the funding for the planning and establishment of that. It will be a coup for tourism and small business in our area once that is built. We are hoping to get it built well and truly in advance of the Olympics so we can start hosting Queensland championships there. At the moment all competitions—not just age group—are held in Tamworth so this facility will make a real difference to anybody who is interested in equestrian in Queensland. It will be good for tourism and small business in Toowoomba, so it was great to see that funding.

The Toowoomba Sports Ground will get an upgrade. This facility was originally going to be part of the Olympics and that was not particularly popular. I think it was a very poor solution that was being put forward by the former Labor government. It was upsetting for the community because there was going to be temporary scaffolding which would get pulled down afterwards and we were not going to be left with much legacy at all. We have changed it so it will now be used for events in our community. It will get \$3.6 million for an upgrade and a tidy up, for some accessibility issues to be addressed and for a new big screen. I thank the minister for that.

A big discussion going into the election was safety where you live, and this is important for the people in Toowoomba. The former premier refused to come up and talk about crime in our community, even when someone was killed in our main street. I note that a shadow minister, Leanne Linard, went up to Toowoomba this week and started talking to people about what is not in this budget. When she was last in Toowoomba, people were asking her what she was going to do about crime, and her answer came back loud and clear: 'Absolutely nothing.' The people of Toowoomba have made their decision and the government has changed.

I appreciate the \$147.9 million in funding which is being put forward to resource community safety and tackle crime. I want to particularly make sure the police presence increases, not just in Toowoomba but across the whole of the state. There is \$225 million for rehabilitation because safety where you live means we have to prevent people from being recidivists. They will need some support and structure in their lives to get back on track, and that is what we will be doing.

There is a housing Boost to Buy program worth \$165 million which means there will be more affordable housing options and support for home ownership in Toowoomba. There is an \$8 million investment going on in Toowoomba at the moment with social housing. We are partnering with several private organisations and charities to expand that housing base. I would like to thank all of the ministers who have been involved in those initiatives because it will make a difference.

We announced the Manufacturing Hub during the election and it was a great announcement. Toowoomba has been a proud supplier of goods, services, employment opportunities and long-term career paths for manufacturing in the mining industry and the agricultural industry. More recently, a couple of people have been dabbling in the space industry and defence industries. It is interesting to have that hub come together so that different people will be able to learn, understand, use the facilities of that hub, expand their capacity and interact with other operators. I think it will be great for the long-term future of employment in Toowoomba. There is \$10 million for that Manufacturing Hub. That key investment will certainly help in our area.

I want to talk about cost of living and the Play On! vouchers, because a lot has been said about this. There was a scare campaign being run that this funding was going to be cut. Why would we cut funding that was an LNP initiative? The opposition limited who could get it and there was a fixed quantum; there were all these restrictions. We are expanding it to cover both summer and winter sports, reducing costs for families. We really want kids participating in community sport because it bonds a community when kids commit to playing on a regular basis. Parents get to meet each other, they talk, they volunteer in the canteen, they umpire and everything else. One day one of them might even make it to be an NRL referee—hopefully, a good one if they are from Toowoomba. Physical activity is going to be key going into the future, particularly for our youngsters. We want to make sure they are moving, we want to make sure cost is not a barrier and we want to help build community by funding that. The Play On! voucher program is a great initiative and will be enhanced by investments in facilities over time.

Mr Mander: It's locked in.

Mr WATTS: It is locked in, absolutely. The Back to School Boost funding gives \$100 per primary school child. It is interesting that some people have said, 'It's not much. Why can't they get more?' If they had not blown the budget historically, there would be more money to help but, unfortunately, year upon year we have seen the budget blown, we have seen cost blow-outs and we have seen things go over; we have seen all manner of squandering of taxpayers' money. We will take a different approach. We will be cautious with this. We will be methodical. We will be diligent in making sure we get the best return—whether we are investing in a Manufacturing Hub to increase productivity or we are trying to help with cost of living. We will make sure the help gets to the people who need it because they are suffering after the previous government squandered it causing inflation and other things to get out of control. That \$100 per child will help with school essentials and support parents, making sure kids get what they need to become good learners in that environment.

I have seen investment in local school halls. The kids at the Toowoomba North State School have been standing outside for years in an August winter, and I can tell you that it is not great in Toowoomba when the westerly winds start blowing during an August winter. They will have a brilliant

\$8 million-plus sports hall. That community has a very high Indigenous and migrant enrolment and some of these kids are doing it tough. They will have a facility that will match any other facility in town so they can have their assemblies, school meetings and everything else there.

Mr Mander: You have one minute.

Mr WATTS: Well, I need to incorporate the rest because I have more words here. The Speaker has reviewed and approved the remainder of my speech on the budget for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*.

The speech read as follows—

As the Assistant Minister to the Premier for Cabinet and South West Queensland, it would be remiss of me not to outline what this Budget delivers for a region that has long given more than it has received. After years of neglect under the former Labor Government, we are delivering real investment, real infrastructure, and real hope for the future.

Let's talk about what's being delivered—on the ground, in real terms.

In Charleville, a new CT scanner at the hospital means locals no longer must travel hundreds of kilometres for vital imaging services. We're also supporting the Charleville Airport Master Plan with \$50,000 to assess runway conditions and future development.

In Roma, we're investing \$5 million in the redevelopment of the Denise Spencer Aquatic Centre—a community asset that will benefit families, schools and local sporting clubs. New affordable housing units will be constructed across two council-owned sites, and 14 new homes for frontline workers are planned across Roma and Charleville.

At Roma State College's senior campus, \$1.5 million will refurbish Block J, delivering modern learning spaces. Mitchell State School receives \$518,000 to upgrade multi-purpose courts, and Quilpie State College will benefit from \$600,000 to improve accessibility.

In St George, \$100,000 has been committed to develop an aerodrome masterplan—ensuring aviation infrastructure remains a key driver of regional growth. At The Gums, a business case is being developed to address longstanding safety concerns at the intersection of the Surat Development Road and Leichhardt Highway.

Cunnamulla will see \$600,000 spent upgrading the community swimming pool. In Nindigully, \$45,000 is going into a town beautification and tourism masterplan. Wyandra will receive \$50,000 to fully upgrade its playground, and Bob Young Memorial Park in Quilpie will be enhanced with \$450,000 for new landscaping and paving.

Across the South West, nine social homes are under construction or contract. We're supporting Specialist Homelessness Services to provide temporary accommodation, outreach, and long-term support. This is part of our plan to deliver 53,500 new social and affordable homes statewide by 2044.

We are backing agricultural sustainability with \$4.9 million for telemetry device installation in the Murray-Darling Basin—critical for regional water security.

We're also investing in culture, with \$4.9 million for Indigenous art centres across the South West—supporting ethical, sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultural tourism.

Planning for the future is underway, with business cases funded for two vital bridge upgrades—Eulo Bridge over the Paroo River and Loudon Bridge—to improve flood resilience and safety.

A \$6.1 million Microgrid Pilot Fund will support energy security in remote communities and resilience during extreme weather events.

Our youngest learners will benefit from the First 5 Forever family literacy initiative, with \$44,607 allocated to early education across the South West.

We're also part of Queensland's tourism future through Destination 2045. Backed by \$446 million statewide, it ensures communities like ours don't miss out on aviation support, event attraction, or tourism development leading up to the 2032 Games.

This Budget backs regional Queensland not with rhetoric—but with results.

After years of being overlooked, we are delivering infrastructure, education, housing, safety and economic opportunity to every corner of South West Queensland. It's not just a fresh start—it's long overdue respect for the people who keep this state running.

The first Crisafulli Government Budget, delivered by my electorate neighbour David Janetzki, cleans up the mess left behind by the former Labor Government. And make no mistake—it is a mess.

We inherited a fiscal time bomb. Labor took debt from \$72 billion to \$218 billion—a 203% increase in just ten years. Despite a record \$70 billion revenue windfall, Labor left Queensland with the worst ambulance ramping rates in the country, over 50,000 families on the social housing waitlist, and a public service at breaking point.

They promised everything, delivered little. We uncovered multi-billion-dollar blowouts in projects like Pioneer-Burdekin, Cross River Rail, CopperString and Borumba Dam—riddled with mismanagement and poor scoping.

Labor's pre-election announcements—state-run service stations, GP clinics, school lunches—had no funding beyond the press release. None were backed by frontline workers. All risked higher taxes and deeper deficits.

By contrast, the Crisafulli Government has taken a calm, methodical, and responsible approach to correct course. This Budget funds every election commitment, delivers the infrastructure Labor only promised, and saves vital services Labor was prepared to cut.

Most importantly, we are doing this without new taxes, without reckless borrowing, and without burdening future generations.

We are rebuilding internal government capacity—cutting consultant dependence and empowering the public service through Queensland Government Consulting Services.

Every line of this Budget reflects our respect for taxpayer money. We are investing in programs that work—not slogans that sell. This Budget lays the foundation for a fresh start—not just in Toowoomba, not just in the South West, but across all of Queensland. Because Queenslanders deserve better. And now, finally, they are getting it.