



Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (10.01 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the appropriation bills. This is a budget of missed opportunities, ignorance of regional Queenslanders, the shackling of Queensland's major industries and proof positive that this government has absolutely no intention of addressing the issues that are most important to all Queenslanders. The Premier and the Treasurer have illustrated yet again that they believe that anyone who lives and works in regional Queensland is nothing but a cash cow.

In the Burdekin electorate there is little to celebrate in this budget. Despite this Treasurer's claim that this is a budget for the regions, Queensland's powerhouse electorate has been ignored. From Alligator Creek and Nome in the north to Bowen in the south, there is little return on the contribution of my constituents. From the coast to Clermont in the west, there is nothing but lip-service. Not one project in the Burdekin electorate has been fully funded in this budget. Instead, my constituents are expected to be grateful for reannouncements. Take for example the Haughton River Floodplain Upgrade Project. This project is already underway, thanks to a contribution from the LNP federal government and due to a hard-fought campaign to bring the project forward—a campaign, I might add, that I was glad to lead because my constituents deserve safe, decent roads and this section of highway includes what I have termed the most dangerous bridge on the entire length of the Bruce Highway.

In the Burdekin district itself, a golden opportunity to diversify the economy, an opportunity to create much needed jobs, was ignored when this government overlooked the Ayr Industrial Estate. In Bowen we saw no action on the often flooded highway in the Delta area. In the Collinsville region we will see much needed work on the Bowen Developmental Road, but, once again, this is a project that needs to be fully funded. Let me explain why. Today the Adani Carmichael mine project was finally approved. The majority of the workers who will work at that mine will travel via the Bowen Developmental Road, a road that still comprises some 98 kilometres of unsealed road. That is right: it is a dirt road that is about to become a motorist's nightmare.

As we head further west into my electorate we finally see real action on Pasha Road and the Moranbah State High School hall. I offer my thanks to my constituents in that area for their passionate support of my lobbying for those projects.

In Nebo we see a further commitment to the water supply project. This is welcomed, but I offer the following advice to the Treasurer: the residents of Nebo will hold you and this government accountable if you break that promise. After all, the residents of Nebo deserve a reliable water supply.

Heading further west to Clermont, there is finally a small commitment to the Peak Downs Highway. Again, this is long overdue. It is worth noting that, despite the name, this work is a long way from Clermont itself. I drove this road last week and I have to tell you: it is nothing but a goat track.

What do we need in the Burdekin electorate? The list is long but it includes a new police station at Clermont. We need a Bruce Highway upgrade south of Townsville from Killymoon Creek to Vantassel Street. That particular section of highway has been the subject of three fatal traffic accidents in the past

12 months including a horrendous fatal traffic accident this week. We need the construction of a food-processing plant at Bowen, funding for the sealing of May Downs Road and further pavement work for Clermont Alpha Road, construction of the Phillips Creek high-level bridge on the Moranbah-Dysart road, a medical imaging facility at Bowen Hospital, an upgrade in the Bowen sports precinct and, of course, new multipurpose halls at Collinsville, Dysart and Clermont state high schools.

I move on to my shadow portfolio of natural resources. It is clear that natural resources are in fact under-resourced in this state. Will the Treasurer explain how they support the resources sector when they are cutting 25 per cent of the department's budget? That is hardly a ringing endorsement for this portfolio. Again, we have seen those opposite claiming to support the resources sector when they are in the regions whilst doing their best to hamper the industry that accounts for one in every five dollars within the Queensland economy. It is blatant hypocrisy and a play straight out of the Bill Shorten playbook—and didn't that end well?

It is not just cuts to resource management. When water infrastructure is needed to provide jobs in regional Queensland and maximise the benefits of our agricultural sector, the only mention in the Budget Measures about dams is the possibility that the election promise of hydro-electricity on the Burdekin Falls Dam may not be delivered. There is no funding for the Nullinga or Urannah dams or for the raising of the Burdekin Falls Dam. In the same week that the North Queensland Agricultural Market & Supply Chain Study identified the opportunity to create more than 2,000 jobs in North Queensland we saw this government drop the ball on water. With over \$270 million on offer from the development of primary industry in the north, the report identified water as a key requirement to create those jobs, but this government is either incompetent or ignorant when it comes to water infrastructure. But there's more. To paraphrase the *Cairns Post*, some of Far North Queensland's projects are stuck on waiting lists while this government drags its feet on the business case for the Nullinga Dam.

Unlike the current government, the LNP has a plan for water security. Unlike Labor, we know that dams create jobs and improve job security. We know that when you have water you have jobs and you have the opportunity to truly unleash the potential of regional Queensland. I reiterate: the LNP will get the Nullinga and Urannah dams shovel-ready and we will raise the Burdekin Falls Dam by 14.6 metres to realise the full potential of Australia's largest river by discharge volume. Unlike the current government, we will stop playing politics with water and the potential that water provides. The LNP will make the Rookwood Weir a reality. Why? Unlike those opposite, we respect regional Queensland and we want regional Queensland to finally get a fair go.

The resources sector in Queensland is worth almost \$63 billion to the state's economy, employing some 315,000 people. It is an industry that pumps almost \$5 billion into the state's coffers. It is, without question, the saviour of this state at present. This government, this Treasurer and this Premier have broken a promise to Queensland in this budget. A 25 per cent hike in royalties on gas and petroleum, according to the Queensland Resources Council, will cost investment and jobs in Queensland. The APPEA has said that the hike in royalties will push gas prices up and put yet another burden on our manufacturing industry. The Association of Mining and Exploration Companies says that this government has little or no understanding of the impact on industry and that this decision threatens future investment which creates jobs and fuels the Queensland economy.

This broken promise has sent a shockwave through Queensland's largest industry. Instead of planning to invest and create jobs, the industry is now fearing a future increase in coal royalties. Like they have with the Carmichael mine project, this government has again increased sovereign risk, has again put upward pressure on energy prices and has again confirmed its anti resources agenda. What the Premier called 'a little bit more' is in fact a \$476 million revenue grab. Instead of leading the way in natural gas development, Queensland is now a victim of what the *Australian* rightfully calls pigheadedness.

This Treasurer and this government have threatened to shatter business confidence in this state. A Queensland gas industry pioneer said that this hike was akin to killing the goose that laid the golden egg. Even after the Treasurer got the facts right, it did not take long to realise that the little bit more was \$476 million for the south-east and that the little bit more is a \$476 million millstone around the neck of industry that does nothing to reduce power prices, nothing to boost infrastructure in the regions and nothing to reverse the utter contempt that this government holds for the people of regional Queensland. This obscene hike in gas royalties is another failing for the gas industry. Just like the failure to deliver the Gas Supply and Demand Action Plan, this hike threatens regional Queensland jobs, investment and exports. Despite costing millions more than predicted, we stand here today still waiting for a plan that was due in 2016.

Unlike those opposite, the LNP has a plan for a thriving resources sector that increases job opportunities rather than destroying them. We have a plan to realise the \$50 billion potential of the Galilee Basin. Rather than playing politics and using Queenslanders as cannon fodder in the fight to

get Bill Shorten elected, we will open up the Galilee Basin and we will welcome the jobs that those resource projects provide. Those 15,000 new jobs are so crucial to this state. When we think that 19,000 people have applied for jobs with Adani for the Carmichael mine project and there are only 1,500 jobs on offer, we appreciate the scale of unemployment in regional Queensland.

The LNP has a plan to give regional Queensland its fair share of royalties. While Labor claimed an extra \$1 billion in coal royalties and spent little of it on infrastructure, the LNP will take every single cent from the Galilee Basin and invest it in projects across the state. Schools, hospitals, roads and bridges will be built right across this great state thanks to the royalties of the Galilee Basin because, unlike Labor, we believe that all of Queensland should benefit from the resources sector. Despite the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy proclaiming today that Labor supports the resources sector, it is the LNP that has stood shoulder to shoulder with the industry. I was proud to stand with Clermont residents only a month ago and send Bob Brown's convoy packing because we do not need some southern greenie activist coming to Queensland telling us how we should live and what jobs we should have.

I want to move on to my portfolio as the shadow minister for Northern Queensland. I wish I could reply to a ministerial counterpart, but there is not one—another indication of the contempt with which this government holds the people of North Queensland. As we saw earlier this week, it does not even have a plan to include more regional MPs in cabinet let alone appoint a minister. It is obvious why there is no minister. After all, North Queensland has been abandoned. Wall to wall Labor MPs have failed to address the key issues that face North Queenslanders and I will leave it to the people of North Queensland to decide if this is due to Labor MPs being ignored or them simply turning a blind eye.

Every single day constituents tell me that the cost of living is one of their greatest challenges. Whether it is a small business, a household, an agricultural operation or a manufacturing business, the electricity costs that this government has overseen are causing significant distress. Despite the recommendations of the Queensland Productivity Commission, this government will not provide consumers with choice of electricity provider. Instead, it offers them an insulting 11 cents per day. The Productivity Commission's recommendation would save consumers in regional Queensland around \$300 per year, almost 10 times what those opposite are offering. Then to add salt to the wounds, this government pocketed an extra \$759 million for generating the electricity it sold to the regions. Where did that money go? It definitely did not find its way to regional Queensland.

Let me turn to crime in the north. Yesterday District Court Judge John Coker said that Townsville was in the midst of an 'epidemic' in relation to unlawful use of motor vehicles. In Townsville unlawful use of motor vehicles is up 53 per cent since 2014-15 and in April 2019 there were five times more robberies than there were in January 2001. Since the three sitting Labor members were elected, assault is up 12 per cent, serious assault is up nine per cent and dangerous operation of a vehicle is up by over 30 per cent. Today—just one day after the budget—the Queensland Police Union expressed concerns over whether the officers that this government promised will actually be delivered to that community. And those opposite wonder why Townsville and North Queensland have had a gutful of their broken promises, their endless reports and reviews and their inaction.

Last Friday night one of Townsville's 24-hour police stations was closed due to a lack of staff. As a former police officer I have never heard of such a thing happening and it is a good indication of what this government has done on crime in North Queensland, and that is absolutely nothing. Instead of taking action on crime, this government will waste \$71 million on bail houses. While people were afraid of going to sleep in their own homes, those opposite failed to build prison and youth detention centres, and what a mess that has become.

Earlier this year we saw the Bruce Highway closed for days due to flooding, hampering the response to flooding throughout North Queensland. Was there any extra funding in this budget for flood proofing? The answer is no. Instead, the people of north and regional Queensland are promised a trust fund body that has not even met, has no charter and no money almost two years after it was promised. Instead of funding for roads in the regions, we have seen cuts to the Transport and Main Roads infrastructure budget and that money being poured into the south-east of the state and yet we are expected to believe that this is a budget for the regions.

The facts are that this government has overseen Queensland having the lowest level of capital expenditure as a percentage of revenue. The government is not just spending less; it is spending it wrong. While families and businesses struggle to pay their electricity bills, those opposite add more and more debt for our children and grandchildren to pay. This is an ignorant, insulting budget that ignores the chance to realise the true potential of this great state and everyone who calls it home. This is a budget big on words but small on action. If there is one thing that this budget has shown it is that you cannot trust Labor with Queenslanders' money.