PREMIER Annastacia Palaszczuk says she is prepared to send officials to Canberra to meet face to face with Infrastructure Australia in a bid to sort through any issues with Cross River Rail.

But she slammed the Commonwealth for playing politics with the project and hinted she believed Infrastructure Australia was also being politicised.

“What we are seeing is more hurdles, more excuses being put in the way,” Ms Palaszczuk said.
“They are continuing to play politics.”

She said she had her officials get straight on the phone to IA after her meeting with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to nut out any concerns.

“In the past they have said to us ... ‘no there is nothing else that we need’,” she said.

“Now all of a sudden there are hurdles being put up in front of us.

“I think they are making excuses.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk met with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull in Brisbane on Thursday. Picture: Claudia Baxter

“What we are seeing is just this lack of cooperation. If I have got to fly officials down to Canberra to sort this out next week I will.”

Ms Palaszczuk said she believed the project needed a pledge of federal money to get started but the state was looking at its options.

Earlier today, Infrastructure Minister Jackie Trad accused Infrastructure Australia of becoming politicised over the Cross River Rail project.

“Infrastructure Australia back in 2012 said this was the number one infrastructure priority for the nation,” she said.
“It seems to be that under Malcolm Turnbull and under Infrastructure Australia today they have a different view.

“I think they have come about that not on the technical evidence that has been supplied in the business case or the economic benefits detailed in the business case but for political reasons.”

Ms Trad said it was “such a furphy” the Cross River Rail business case needed more work.

“A 2000-plus page, $7 million business case that has been independently reviewed was submitted to Infrastructure Australia more than a year ago,” she said.

Ms Trad reiterated her call for federal funding to build Cross River Rail.

“We need this project to go ahead, we need the Feder Government to come on board and to participate in this nation building piece of infrastructure,” she said.

Ms Trad said there appeared to be $7.4 billion reduction in Commonwealth infrastructure spending over the forward estimates.

“This has been independently compiled by Infrastructure Partnerships Australia,” she said.

“What this means is the Commonwealth is spending less in every state and jurisdiction around critical infrastructure projects.”

Meanwhile, the Property Council Queensland has backed the State Government’s warning about poorly structured value-capture models essentially being a new tax on Queenslanders to pay for Cross River Rail.

“We welcome the Deputy Premier’s comments today that some forms of value capture are just unfair taxes,” Property Council executive director Chris Mountford said.

“A poorly designed ‘value capture’ framework could end up as a tax on growth and undo the economic good that the project supposed to bring to the city.

“It is important to remember that property owners already directly pay infrastructure charges, GST, stamp duty, land tax, local government rates, capital gains tax and a raft of state and local government fees when developing and owning property. Most of these taxes already increase when the value of a property increases.”
OVERNIGHT: Queensland’s most important infrastructure project is in limbo weeks out from the state Budget as the Commonwealth demands residents pay higher taxes to build Cross River Rail.

Political infighting that resulted in Malcolm Turnbull and Annastacia Palaszczuk meeting to thrash out issues yesterday, intensified last night as Infrastructure Minister Jackie Trad accused the Prime Minister of unfair double standards.

Revealing Mr Turnbull’s problem with the state’s plans was that businesses and homeowners won’t pay enough towards the $5.2 billion project, Ms Trad said it was “inexcusable” that NSW and WA projects were funded in last week’s federal Budget without the same requirements.

It’s understood the Commonwealth wants details of how much the state can raise in new taxes from homes and businesses in the rail corridor that benefit from the project under value capture.

They also want patronage numbers and more detail on how it will connect with current public transport and the planned Brisbane Metro.

Brisbane’s Cross River Rail

But Ms Trad said Queenslanders should not be forced to pay more than residents in other states for necessary infrastructure.
“Their focus has always been on the financing of the project and in particular how to maximise value capture,” Ms Trad said, ahead of a ministerial council meeting of the country’s infrastructure ministers in Brisbane today.

“Their plans would mean higher taxes for Queenslanders. We have said we would look at value capture and we did. But we don’t want unfair taxes imposed on Queensland that no other state has to pay.”

The revelation came as the Premier emerged from her meeting with the PM to concede there were issues with the business case while refusing to detail them.

Shadow Treasurer Scott Emerson seized on the comments to call for the “flawed business case” to be released.

But Treasurer Curtis Pitt denied the state had botched the process.

“I understand that there has been suggestions today that there’s additional information that may be required,” he said. “We’ve had that offer on the table since we handed the business case to Infrastructure Australia nearly 12 months ago.”

Mr Pitt said the state had always been ready to provide additional details.

“To have that come up today is a bit of a revelation,” he said.

An artist’s impression of the Cross River Rail project.
Ms Palaszczuk later released a statement insisting the “completed”, 2000-page document had been with Infrastructure Australia (IA) since June last year. Mr Turnbull said discussions would continue as he again referred to the business case as a “proposal” that was “inadequate in a number of respects”.

“This is Infrastructure Australia’s view and they want to know more about its integration with other transport systems and networks in southeast Queensland, about land use opportunities, generally the development aspects of it,” he said. “It needs more work. I am not making a criticism of it, I am just stating a fact.”

But Ms Trad said the business case was comprehensive and IA was only seeking additional information on “small technical issues”.

A leaked copy of the business case last year had revealed up to $7 billion would be raised from “value capture” proposals.

They included $1.2 billion for a car park levy and $1 billion in increased land tax on property owners near Cross River Rail’s proposed stations.

There is also a proposal to collect up to $2.6 billion through a public transport infrastructure levy on property owners and a $1 billion surcharge on ticket prices.

A plan to raise up to $1.23 billion from a motor vehicle registration levy has been ruled out. The Courier-Mail understands two of the state’s top directors-general, Dave Stewart and Frankie Carroll, took part in a phone hook-up with IA officials yesterday afternoon to discuss any outstanding issues.
MALCOLM Turnbull and Annastacia Palaszczuk had the perfect opportunity to show voters that some things are above politics when they emerged from their 60-minute meeting in Brisbane yesterday.

They should have come to an agreement on a project everybody seems to believe the state needs, a project that has been almost a decade in the making, a project that continues to grow in cost every year it remains on the wish list.

But instead of leadership and a shared commitment on delivering the $5.4 billion Cross River Rail, all voters got yesterday was more petty bickering as the political bunfight over the state’s most critical piece of infrastructure continued.

The state says its business case is complete.

The Commonwealth says it is inadequate.

Yet future funding has been committed to other projects in other states where business cases are yet to be done.

Southeast Queensland commuters preparing to board packed trains today as they make their way to work couldn’t care less.

They just want it built. It really is as plain and simple as that.
The time has come for both levels of government to do just that.

With the Commonwealth clearly refusing to budge, the spotlight now falls on the Queensland Government to set aside enough cash in its looming budget to at least get this vital project started.

- Sarah Vogler