



Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Record of Proceedings, 24 February 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

APPROPRIATION (2020-2021) BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Community Support and Services Committee, Report

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (12.22 pm): As the Liberal National Party's shadow minister for the arts I rise to address the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill and that area of budgeted expenditure examined by the Community Support and Services Committee and, specifically, the examination of budgeted expenditure for the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy. There is no doubt that Queensland's incredibly talented and diverse cultural and artistic community was one of the hardest sectors hit during the COVID-19 pandemic. Responding to this challenge has been a core responsibility of the state Labor government and whilst I acknowledge that some financial support has been made available, including the bringing forward of \$5.2 million of the Queensland Performing Art Centre's recurrent base grant as well as the waiving of some facility and utilities costs, I continue to be contacted by members of Queensland's arts community who remain concerned that more needs to be done by the Palaszczuk state Labor government for Queensland's individual artists and performers.

I do, however, wish to join with the Labor minister for the arts and acknowledge and thank senior members of Queensland's artistic and performing arts community and our artistic institutions for their efforts during the pandemic to ensure that as restrictions and other associated measures are eased Queenslanders can once again safely view, experience and enjoy the best that Queensland's artists and performers have to offer.

I take this opportunity to highlight that when questioned regarding the construction of a new theatre at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre the minister advised that it is 'definitely on time'. However, when pressed further as to whether this project is on budget, the minister chose not to answer the question directly and instead pointed to additional funding that has been allocated to the construction of the new theatre under the guise of expanding the offerings of the theatre. The minister's response to such a simple question of probity—that is, is this state government project on budget—again underscores the difficulty that the Palaszczuk state Labor government consistently has with being accountable to and transparent with the people of Queensland.

The Liberal National Party is a fervent supporter of building the infrastructure that our state of Queensland so desperately needs, infrastructure that has long been neglected and ignored by the Palaszczuk state Labor government. The Liberal National Party welcomes this investment but investing in infrastructure should never be a blank cheque. The Palaszczuk state Labor government must do better and be more accountable and transparent with every dollar it is spending and intends to spend on behalf of Queenslanders.

I also take this opportunity to say that the Palaszczuk state Labor government budget for 2020-21 exemplifies the ongoing difficulty that the government has with transparency and accountability. Nowhere was this more evident than in the duplicity with which the state Labor government treated Queenslanders with respect to additional borrowings. Labor told Queenslanders at the last state election that it would be borrowing on their behalf \$4 billion, but just weeks later that figure had blown out by a factor of seven to \$28 billion. What is worse is that this is despite promises of investing in the job-creating infrastructure that Queensland needs and deserves to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. They were not upfront when they actually went to the election with respect to that.

There are many other issues contained within the Community Support and Services Committee report on this year's budget. With respect to community infrastructure, such as neighbourhood and community centres, there remains significant concern in the sector with respect to the indexation of the funding and the programs that are provided within various neighbourhood and community centres across Queensland. My community is very concerned about the lack of investment in local infrastructure in relation to a new community centre and the response from the Labor minister with respect to funding. At the last state election they were given the impression by local Labor representatives that there would be sites and solutions found and funding forthcoming with respect to investing in that infrastructure.

On the reformed 16 national Closing the Gap targets there is a lack of clarity as to how the state government, from a jurisdictional perspective, intends to implement those here in Queensland to close the gap. It certainly needs whole-of-government strategies. I heard the contribution from the member for Surfers Paradise with respect to how various ministers and government departments work to implement that. The social housing waiting list is growing ever longer and that is of significant concern to vulnerable Queenslanders. It needs practical solutions and a commitment to working with the sector, as was outlined by the member for Everton.

I take this opportunity to thank the committee secretariat and the members of the committee for all of their work. The estimates process can certainly improve. It needs more time allocated for members of the opposition to ask questions. I know those matters will be considered by this House in due course.