




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BONNEY

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2); APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (12.54 pm): I rise to contribute to the cognate debate on Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) and Appropriation Bill (No. 2) as a member of the Economics and Governance Committee. We have bills before us that approve expenditure blowouts of this government on top of the 2018-19 state budget of almost \$1.4 billion. That is certainly not what I would describe as standard, as the member for Logan just said. It is a staggering amount of money, but this sort of unforeseen expenditure is nothing new for a Labor government.

Last week they marked five years in office and in that time over \$4.1 billion has been appropriated on top of the budget for unforeseen expenditure. This shows they cannot control spending and they have consistently shown they cannot manage money. As we have heard from the shadow Treasurer, this is eight times higher than the previous LNP government and it is leading our economy into an ever worsening debt. That is a debt that is now predicted to hit almost \$92 billion in 2023, another billion dollars higher than the Treasurer predicted only mid last year.

Almost 90 per cent of the unforeseen expenditure was by three departments: the Department of Transport and Main Roads, the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs, and the Department of Education. If we look at the Department of Transport and Main Roads alone, we see that the overspend seems to be due to underbudgeting on their part. Only \$37.6 million was for disaster recovery. That is just over 10 per cent of the total unforeseen expenditure. An extra \$84 million was needed to supply eight next generation rolling stock trains. Not only does that seem like an extraordinary amount of money; we also have to wonder why it was unforeseen. People are starting to notice Labor's mismanagement.

The *Courier-Mail* marked five years of this government with their excellent 'State of dismay' reporting last week showing that only 16 per cent of people thought the government's handling of the economy was good or excellent and a huge 43 per cent saying it was weak or poor. An article in the *Brisbane Times* last week stated—

In the past two years, expenses have increased by 11 per cent to \$7.3 billion, while the government has only been able to grow its revenue by \$4 billion (6 per cent).

That is despite all the new taxes they are bringing in. That was based on a recent Auditor-General's report to parliament No. 11 titled *Queensland government state finances: 2018-19 results of financial audits*. In that report the Auditor-General said—

The financial performance of the Queensland Government has reduced over the last two financial years, with expenses incurred increasing at a greater rate than revenue.

It further stated—

This year, the Queensland Government reported a net operating deficit of \$1.1 billion for the total state sector. While the Queensland Government has continued to grow its revenue, this has not kept pace with the growth in expenses over the last two years.

All of this is happening in the context of unemployment being out of control. In my electorate of Bonney in particular we now have over 1,000 more unemployed people than when I spoke to the budget in 2018. We are now up to 9.6 per cent unemployment in my electorate. Whatever jobs the government say they are creating, they are not helping our part of the Gold Coast. People are crying out for work and in many cases it is out of their control. They are suffering because of the mismanagement of our economy under this government.

At the committee hearings on this bill we heard Treasury officials explain that, while these bills are about unforeseen expenditure, this occurs within the context of a number of agencies that spent less than what was approved in their original appropriation bills. This is detailed in the Consolidated Fund financial report, which outlines how each department spent their appropriation from the Consolidated Fund for the financial year and outlines why any differences might have occurred, including lapsed appropriation in 2018-19. The problem I have with this is that much of the budgeted money was underspent in areas that need it the most.

The Department of Housing and Public Works, for example, underspent by \$224 million. When I am looking at the rising homelessness in my area where every park and every bit of the bushland is full of people doing it tough, it is incredibly frustrating to know the Gold Coast Youth Foyer was funded in the budget two years ago but work has still not begun. The government had plans ready to go and a block of land on the corner of Smith Street and High Street in Southport slated to have 40 units for young people at risk of homelessness. It was supposed to be open in December last year, but still nothing has happened. Why are projects that are desperately needed delayed and yet this overspend is so drastic?

Queenslanders need a government that can manage their money. We have rising debt, rising cost of living, unemployment figures in desperate need of reduction and a government that has unforeseen expenditure of \$1.4 billion. It is not good enough, we deserve better and we can make that happen on 31 October this year.