



Speech By  
**Lachlan Millar**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

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## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL**

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#### **Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

#### **Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill**

#### **Transport and Resources Committee, Report**

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (5.31 pm): As the House turns its attention to the recent budget, Queenslanders should be aware of the unusual circumstances in which we do so and I am not referring to coronavirus. In last weekend's *Sunday Mail* Queenslanders read that the 56th parliament is the only one this century to have spent less than 1,000 hours in session. I table that news article for the benefit of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Article from the *Sunday Mail*, dated 21 February 2021, titled 'State Labor sits down on the job' [172](#).

The newspaper also reported that in a data period stretching back to 1998 last term's Labor government is the only one to have averaged less than 10 hours on sitting days. That is a hallmark of a government that shirks scrutiny. Therefore it comes as no surprise that the government refused to deliver the budget prior to the recent October election. The government went to the election stating that under Labor the debt would increase by only \$4 billion but, when the budget was finally released some five months later than is conventionally delivered, we discovered that the debt is actually projected to increase by \$28 billion. More alarming still, the extra debt is not to build infrastructure that will increase the state's net worth, as is the case for New South Wales and Victoria. In Queensland the extra debt is just to keep us staggering along. It is to keep the lights on. Labor's 41-page glossy brochure is not an economic plan, despite ministers appearing clutching it desperately at every opportunity. The repeated use of that photo prop has become something of a laughing matter right across the state, but it is a sad joke about lost opportunity and infrastructure.

Having delayed the budget delivery until after Queenslanders voted, the Labor government really owed Queenslanders a frank and fearless estimates examination of that budget. Instead, we were insulted by a deliberately truncated estimates process where questions were dodged and the Labor committee chairs ran a protection racket for Labor ministers. That shirking of responsibility might be good politics for Labor, but it is devastating for the honest administration of Queensland and ultimately it is devastating for our democracy. After three terms of Labor and facing another four years it is apparent that the conventions that ensure transparency are breaking down. Our parliament is not sitting as it should. Not only are debates artificially shortened; our estimates process has been deliberately frustrated. I say 'deliberately' because the methods used by the Labor committee chairs to protect ministers and bureaucrats from awkward questions were similar from hearing to hearing. The problem with shirking scrutiny is that it leads to a perception of cover-ups and integrity issues.

In Transport and Main Roads, which is one of the most critical areas for infrastructure investment in a state as big as Queensland, we saw multiple issues of integrity highlighted during the estimates hearing. The Minister for Transport and Main Roads has had previous issues with the use of a private email account for ministerial purposes. During the estimates hearing the LNP sought further information about the use of that private email. Unfortunately, the acting chair's ruling prevented a thorough examination. To the thoughtful observer all that means is that questions still remain about the minister's actions.

The LNP also sought clarification around the interaction between the Department of Transport and Main Roads and Mr Jim Soorley. While Mr Soorley is a former Labor lord mayor of Brisbane who once earned a crust as a Labor connected lobbyist, apparently he is no longer registered as a lobbyist under Queensland law. His connection with Wilsons Boathouse seafood restaurant and any interactions with the department on their behalf deserve the raised eyebrows they received. Unfortunately, no further information was forthcoming.

Another issue concerning the role of a lobbyist raised at the hearings was in regard to the Labor government's decision to build trains in Maryborough. Much was made of that commitment during the election campaign. In this context it is highly relevant that the LNP raised the role played by registered lobbyist Evan Moorhead. A purported architect of Labor's re-election campaign, Mr Moorhead is a former ALP state secretary and—surprise, surprise—a registered lobbyist. The only company with an established train manufacturing workshop in Maryborough is Downer and—surprise, surprise—they are a client of Mr Moorhead. The LNP highlighted that Mr Moorhead had multiple meetings with Minister Bailey's senior adviser prior to the government's pre-election announcement. The LNP asked what was discussed at those multiple meetings. We also asked if other train manufacturers were given equal access. Minister Bailey did not provide a response. That seems to be the standard practice. Once again a lack of response means questions remain. It is still unclear what level of influence was exerted by the ALP aligned lobbyist when the policy was being developed. It is also unclear if the subsequent deal is the best value for money for Queensland taxpayers.

*(Time expired)*