



Speech By **Samuel O'Connor**

MEMBER FOR BONNEY

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Economics and Governance Committee, Report

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (12.30 pm): As the shadow innovation minister, I rise to make a contribution to the Appropriation Bill debate in relation to the Economics and Governance Committee's estimates hearing. Advance Queensland is the main program through which innovation is supported in our state. It is worth around \$755 million, and we have been told it has backed over 7½ thousand projects and supported 27,000 jobs. However, there is a complete lack of detail about how that is calculated which is concerning, particularly for something so reliant on science, data and performance metrics.

In 2019, the former minister announced a review into Advance Queensland. At the last estimates 18 months later we found out that still had not been completed, and at this estimates we found out that the review had finally taken place and led to the creation of the innovation council. There were no specific outcomes from the review apart from setting up this new body—no data considered, no public consultation undertaken, no findings to report and no KPIs to guide future investment. That is extraordinary when we are talking about over \$755 million worth of Queenslanders' money. There is nothing more we know about it other than a table with just four rows in the SDS of the budget.

If the government thinks innovation is going so well in this state, why not release more information about how these outcomes are calculated? What concerns me is that there was not a real review undertaken but, rather, what seems to be a general conversation around a table with nothing formally recorded of that process.

Reviews give an opportunity to learn what needs to be improved and to ensure best outcomes are being achieved. When we are talking about such a significant amount of money and important outcomes we need for Queensland, we have to get it right. This is particularly important given the decision by the Queensland Audit Office to cancel their review of Advance Queensland's activities, as was well articulated in a recent *InQueensland* article 'Maybe the \$800m Advance Qld plan was money well spent—but we'll never know'. I table that for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Media article from *InQueensland*, undated, titled 'Maybe the \$800m Advance Qld plan was money well spent—but we'll never know' [1277](#).

The article rightly highlights the lack of transparency around how the numbers around tens of thousands of jobs attracted to Queensland and investment are calculated and the lack of any formal cost-benefit analysis. We need a thorough review to assess the performance of Advance Queensland and, without it, I am concerned that we are not getting the best results.

In my part of the Gold Coast I have seen the difficulty this government is having with getting this off the ground with the health and knowledge precinct. Within it there is Cohort, the co-working and innovation space within some of the communal spaces of the old Commonwealth Games village. It is practically the only bright light we have seen since the games. We have only just had the sod turning of Proxima, which will be the first development since the games over three years ago.

The health and knowledge precinct and the unnecessarily and confusingly rebranded Lumina within it are sold as an innovation community—in fact, the hub of innovation in our city. There are incredible opportunities because it has the largest campus of Griffith University, the Gold Coast University Hospital, the Gold Coast Private Hospital and our first build-to-rent community, Smith Collective. The light rail runs right through it, it has access to Smith Street and the M1 and, especially at the moment, there is an abundance of empty space to develop, but for the most part the only thing Gold Coasters see as they drive past Smith Street is the growing number of car parks being put on that empty space. Under questioning at the hearing about the precinct it became apparent that Advance Queensland has no real engagement in spaces like this. I find that staggering when this is clearly a precinct that needs support, and it is something the Gold Coast deserves.

Lot Fourteen in Adelaide has Google, Amazon, the Australian Space Discovery Centre, MIT and even Airspeeder, a company whose mission is to build the ultimate performance flying car. This is what can happen when a government knows how to attract and curate innovation, yet our innovation department is barely engaged in one of the most, if not the most, significant regional innovation hubs in our state.

Clearly the department of state development is not capable of getting this off the ground, so I urge the innovation department to get on board and turn their focus to the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct. I will be hopeful that we can see some movement on this before the next state budget and, as the local MP and shadow minister, I will keep advocating to make this precinct a reality.

One of the many things we have learned from this pandemic is that we need diversification of our industries to ensure our economy is strong. Queensland more broadly has the second largest tourism industry in Australia, and it will always be one of the foundations of our economy with the natural beauty we have in our state. However, given the migration we are seeing, we need more diverse opportunities across all our regions for all Queenslanders, and innovation can deliver that. That is especially important on the Gold Coast. Griffith is an exceptional university and its graduates should be able to get jobs in our city. We need to innovate, we need to promote new startups and we need to do more to attract interstate and international businesses to call Queensland home. That is how we will advance Queensland.