



Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**

**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**


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Record of Proceedings, 10 November 2022

## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 3)**

### **APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 3)**

#### **BETTING TAX AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (4.42 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 3) and the Appropriation Bill (No. 3), which are being debated in cognate with the Betting Tax and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.

The objective of the Appropriation Bill is to seek formal authorisation for specified amounts to be paid from the Consolidated Fund for unforeseen expenditure. Fourteen government departments and agencies, including the Legislative Assembly, have incurred unforeseen expenditure in the financial year starting 1 July 2021. Unforeseen expenditure is another name for a budget blowout. The legislation authorises the Treasurer to pay \$2.8 billion from the Consolidated Fund from the government's central bank account which holds income. This is the biggest blowout of its kind in the last decade, so what does it tell us?

It tells a story of a Treasurer unable to contain wasteful spending. What the bill lays out clearly is that the current Treasurer is completely unable to manage the state's finances and fails to treat Queensland taxpayers' money with the respect it deserves. This is despite the additional billions in taxation income. Despite the income from all of the new taxes and rivers of gold from coal realities, we see declining service delivery across a range of portfolios. At the same time, there is wasteful spending from this Palaszczuk Labor government.

One white elephant of waste that comes to mind is the Wellcamp regional accommodation centre. In the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning there is \$573 million worth of unforeseen expenditure. The explanatory notes state that the additional equity adjournments were primarily due to funding for the Queensland Regional Accommodation Centre. Located at Wellcamp, the Regional Accommodation Centre cost taxpayers some \$237 million. This quarantine facility was all about playing politics with the former federal government. Perhaps if the Labor government had not wasted funds on Wellcamp, the money wasted on the accommodation centre would be enough to bring the local government Works for Queensland program up to \$100 million per year.

The explanatory notes mention funding adjustments for the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to cover recovery and reconstruction costs primarily arising from flooding in the summer of 2021-22. There is no doubt that Queenslanders and local governments have experienced a summer of natural disasters. Queensland is one of the most disaster prone states in the country. That is another reason why it is so important not to waste taxpayers' funds because we do not know the extent or frequency of the next disaster shock that might impact our state. It is so disappointing to see that \$237 million wasted at Wellcamp.

There is money that is needed urgently for the extension of the Extraordinary Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants, which close 5 December this year and 6 January next year. There are eligible Queenslanders who are applying to QRIDA right now for these recovery grants and they are worried they will miss out on this grant funding. Constituents like Jack in my electorate cannot get on to QRIDA on the phone. They have waited up to an hour on hold, only to be hung up on when the connection is finally established. It is too wet for Jack to get any trucks onto the property to do the repair work. Many others cannot get quotes because there is a shortage of contractors.

It is disappointing that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries had an unforeseen expenditure of \$2.2 million; however, they still hang up on their clients. What Jack needs is a minister for agriculture who speaks up in cabinet and ensures there is customer service provided by his department and agencies. I call on this Labor government to talk to their colleagues in Canberra and approve a 12-month extension to the Extraordinary Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants. There are only three weeks left to get this extension approved. Without that extension there will be many eligible Queensland farmers, businesses and not-for-profits across southern Queensland—some of whom have been impacted by multiple events—that will miss out.

**Mr Perrett** interjected.

**Ms LEAHY:** I take the interjection from the member for Gympie. Many MPs, including myself, have written to the Deputy Premier. He needs to turn his attention to this extension urgently. There are only three weeks left. Queenslanders deserve better than what they are getting at the current time from this Palaszczuk government.