



Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Record of Proceedings, 17 August 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Community Support and Services Committee, Report

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (3.06 pm): I rise to address the Appropriation Bill 2022 and, specifically, the proposed expenditure of the Palaszczuk state Labor government as examined by the Queensland parliament's Community Support and Services Committee. There is no question that the last 2½ years has been one of the most difficult periods endured by Queensland artists and performers, as well as artistic and cultural organisations and associated businesses. After two years of considerable disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated necessary public health measures, Queensland's artistic and cultural community were looking forward to a rejuvenation and a brighter year ahead at the start of 2022. Unfortunately, the significant weather and flood events of this year have undoubtedly had considerable impacts across Brisbane and South-East Queensland.

That being said, these events have not diminished the spirit or determination of our key artistic institutions and I particularly wish to acknowledge the significant hard work and determination of all within the Queensland Cultural Centre precinct to ensure that there was as little disruption as possible and the displays, exhibitions and performances could continue as planned. As just one example, many Queensland families and parents have shared with me, as the Liberal National Party shadow minister for the arts, their disappointment at the ongoing closure of the Queensland Museum's outdoor dinosaur garden due to the impacts of this year's floods. In the budget estimates hearing of 4 August it was confirmed by the chief executive officer of the Queensland Museum Network, Dr Jim Thompson, that this closure was as a result of severe damage to the soft fall in the dinosaur garden area. It was further confirmed that, with a replacement bill of approximately \$180,000, the Queensland Museum Network is seeking to expand its scope of work beyond the soft fall replacement with an estimated expenditure of approximately \$300,000 to \$400,000. With an estimated completion date of 16 September, I know that many Queenslanders will be eager to see the reopening of this enjoyable and educational exhibit.

This budget estimates hearing of the Community Support and Services Committee also underscored the state Labor government's track record of failing to deliver projects on time and on budget. Nowhere is this perhaps more evident than with the Labor government's delivery of the new performing arts venue at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre. This will be an important new theatre for that precinct. Since Labor first announced this \$150 million project it has become a \$175 million project. It has now become almost an annual tradition for the budget estimates hearing to reveal that the projected completion and opening date for the new performing arts venue has been set back further.

In 2018 the Palaszczuk state Labor government told Queenslanders that the new performing arts venue would be fully operational from 2022. Last year, in a press conference just prior to the 2021 estimates hearings, both the Minister for the Arts and the Premier announced the completion date would be 2023, with the Minister for the Arts even stating—

There was always a commitment that would see the new theatre open to the public in 2023 ... I'm looking forward to 2023 when we have our official opening.

In these estimates hearings it was confirmed by the Director-General of the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy that the practical completion date of 4 January 2023 has now blown out to a practical completion date of mid-2024.

The Minister for the Arts must comprehensively explain to this parliament how the project completion for the new performing arts venue has blown out by a further 18 months and how the Palaszczuk state Labor government intends to keep the project within the allocated budget, as it is previously promised. The Queensland Performing Arts Centre is a cultural icon, and Queenslanders want to know with certainty when the doors will open so that they can finally enjoy the new theatre. Our vibrant arts and cultural community, and all Queenslanders, deserve openness and transparency from the state government on this important project.

Finally, I wish to briefly reflect on the opening statement made by the Minister for Communities and Housing and Minister for Digital Economy wherein she promoted the Queensland government's \$115.8 million boost to neighbourhood and community centre funding over four years. That is \$115 million yet still nothing has been progressed by the state Labor government, in collaboration with the Brisbane City Council and the federal Commonwealth government, to deliver a much needed community centre for residents of the electorate of Moggill. That is very important local infrastructure that needs to be delivered for my residents. I encourage the state government to consider working in conjunction with the Brisbane City Council and the federal government, given that there is an allocated grant by the federal government. That would certainly provide additional assistance to local residents and provide a much needed community centre that could house community organisations and provide additional services.