



Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2023


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

State Development and Regional Industries Committee, Report

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (3.19 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the 2023-24 budget estimates and the report of the State Development and Regional Industries Committee. The estimates process gives the parliament the opportunity to question the government on its financial stewardship and its proposals for the forthcoming year. As has become apparent throughout this process, the government has no ability to adapt and is losing touch with everyday Queenslanders. It has grown rigid and unresponsive, its management of the state's finances has become haphazard, and there is a growing gap between its promises and its record of delivery—or, should we say, lack of delivery.

When it comes to local government, again the estimates hearing showed the negligence that the Palaszczuk Labor government shows towards Queensland councils. Some 755 days ago at the 2021 estimates, the government lauded how they would reform the onerous conflict of interest requirements placed on mayors and councillors. This is the third estimates that has passed and we have seen no reform from this tired Labor government. Mayors and councillors will have done the whole term in local government without seeing that promised reform. This may discourage many from standing at the next election if there is no significant legislative reform before the March 2024 election as promised. Councillors have been investigated for blocking harassment on Facebook, for arranging the keys to council facilities outside of office hours and for calling for better health services in their communities.

The estimates committee process revealed a confirmation from the director-general of the department that the Bundaberg flood levee is over budget by 119 per cent and will be delivered three years later than the Labor candidate promised in the 2020 election campaign. The people of Bundaberg deserve better. It all comes back to that lack of delivery by the Palaszczuk Labor government. Furthermore, it has become evident that the Palaszczuk Labor government has not devoted the energy that is needed to resolve the chronic gravel shortage experienced by councils across Queensland. During the hearing, the director-general was asked to what extent his department was involved in the working group, and he said—

I do not know. It is not a working group that we have established. If the local government division is not involved, I will seek to have them involved.

We then learned that they were already involved. In fact the local government department is involved in the quarry material native title working group and they have met three times. Then, when the CEO of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority was asked whether his organisation—that is in charge of \$7 billion worth of recovery works—was part of the group, he stated—

I am not familiar with the group, I am sorry.

By the end of the hearing, the QRA was invited to future meetings of the working group. I have been told of councils which have 50 out of 109 gravel pits that expired on 30 June this year and only a few of those 50 pits have been reactivated. This is causing a huge impost on them from a cost point of view to cart that gravel the extra distances. If you go over the border, New South Wales councils do not have this issue with gravel supply.

Ms Boyd: They don't have leasehold land.

Ms LEAHY: It makes you ask the question of why this is happening in Queensland when the legislation referred to is federal legislation. Why is this playing out in Queensland only? And they do have leasehold land in New South Wales. I say to the Labor government: resolve this issue and stop giving councils gravel rash.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Pause the clock. Members for Everton, Pine Rivers and Maryborough, I ask that you refrain from interjecting so we can hear the member conclude her speech.

Ms LEAHY: The government has only begun to take this issue seriously since the LNP first raised it. Once again, councils have fallen victim to the chaos and crisis of this tired, third-term Labor government.

In estimates we also heard the concerns about the government's failure to act on a faulty pH system in Yarrabah, which resulted in contaminated drinking water. Shockingly, it was exposed that it took the water minister months to speak to the Yarrabah mayor about the issue, following concerns that were first raised with the department in 2022.

The estimates process, despite its well-known and long-standing shortcomings, provided no significant evidence that the government has a sustainable and considered plan to restore and improve key services or bring stability to local government. This government is consumed by crisis and chaos and by shortages that leave councils with gravel rash. This government has again failed in its basic responsibilities for Queenslanders.