



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Transport and Resources Committee, Report

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (12.13 pm): I would also like to contribute to the debate on the estimates committee report. The estimates process gives the parliament—our parliament, the people's parliament—the opportunity to question the government of the day on its financial stewardship and its proposals for the forthcoming year. Unfortunately, the estimates process did find some issues that we are facing in Queensland.

Before I get to that, I would like to thank the committee for the estimates process—the chair and all committee members, but especially the committee secretary, Jodhi, and assistant, Zac—and everybody else involved in the estimates process. They do a fantastic job. Our estimates process goes until 8.15 at night. It is one of the longest estimates hearings and a lot of work goes into it, so I thank the committee.

I will start with the transport and main roads portfolio. The estimates hearing further exposed the government's massive breach of trust with taxpayers over the \$2.4 billion blowout in the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program. It was revealed that the minister's office had requested that the true \$9.5 billion cost be removed from communications. Coming three days after the media release was issued, this raised serious doubts over the minister's assertion that the use of the incorrect amount on the media release was just an oversight. What this means is that this cost blowout will affect not only the people in South-East Queensland but also the people in regional Queensland because some things are going to have to be cut. Some things are not going to be funded.

One of the biggest issues that we face in regional and rural areas is the backlog maintenance issue. This is still a major issue when it comes to roads that are in desperate need of repair, especially the road from Emerald all the way out to Alpha and roads right across regional Queensland. We only have to look at the Dawson Highway to see this. I suggest government members jump in a car and go from Moura all the way to Bauhinia and see how they feel at the end of the day. That is a road that is in desperate need of repair. Backlog maintenance is still a major issue.

The other issue that was raised in the estimates process—and this has major implications for the Department of Transport and Main Roads—is the closure of gravel pits in rural and remote areas. This is going to hurt rural and regional councils. I will give members an example. The Boulia Shire Council covers 61,000 square kilometres. Gravel pit closures have seen them go from 104 pits down to four

pits. We are now looking at cost blowouts for the Donohue Highway. It was going to cost \$176,000 to fix the flood affected parts of the Donohue Highway, but because of the gravel pit closures they are looking at an estimated cost—as reported in the *Queensland Country Life*—of \$5.6 million. Councils like the Boulia Shire Council, which punch well above their weight and do a fantastic job, do not have the money or the resources to be able to cover that cost blowout. That is now estimated to cost \$5.6 million. I know that this comes under the minister for agriculture, so I say to the minister that he needs to solve this because these councils cannot afford that sort of cost blowout.

The other issue of concern is that our Indigenous groups are unnecessarily getting blamed for this. Only last week the Transport and Resources Committee was in Birdsville and we were talking to the Mithaka people. Their concern is that they want these gravel pits opened but they are blamed for their closure by some people. It is not their fault. This is being held up by red tape down in South-East Queensland. We have good, hardworking people, including the Mithaka people, who want this solved. I urge the minister to solve this. I know it is a big issue when it comes to the agreements, but it needs to be solved because it is certainly something of great concern.

I now move onto the energy, renewables and hydrogen portfolio. The hearing also uncovered the clear concern between ministers around the future of the Pioneer-Burdekin hydro project. The budget estimates has revealed that there is not only no funding for the project in this year's budget but also no business case. The government made a big announcement about the Pioneer-Burdekin hydro scheme last year and yet there is no funding and no business case. Landholders in that area—and I know that area very well—are very worried. Their property prices are now under pressure. They have no certainty. We need to be able to give these people certainty. It is fantastic agricultural country in the Pioneer Valley. It is part of the cane growing region for Mackay Sugar. They need certainty. It needs to be sorted out.

With resources there are a multitude of issues. There is declining industry confidence plaguing the Queensland resources sector. Our industry stakeholders need to be confident that they have a bright future.