




Speech By
Melissa McMahon

MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

Record of Proceedings, 5 March 2024

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (12.26 pm): I rise to make my contribution to the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2023. Whilst I certainly acknowledge the history lesson that we have been subjected to thus far, I will focus on the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2023. I know that there is a time period allocated to this debate so, again, I will try to keep my contribution relevant to the facts and figures that are located within the documents, within the bill and within the report that the committee prepared.

As has been noted in previous contributions, the bill allocates appropriations of some \$697 million to Queensland Health. In the public briefing we heard where the majority of that is allocated to—that is, the public sector wages policies and the superannuation arrangements that were made for Queensland Health workers. On this side of the House, we do not shy away from appropriately and adequately paying our Queensland Health workers.

I know that those opposite have an approach of breaking the back of healthcare worker entitlements in this state. We want to make sure that we keep our healthcare workers. Those who work in the health space know that there is an extreme shortage of qualified healthcare workers not only in this state but also in this country and internationally. I can tell the House exactly what will happen if we fail to pay our health professionals appropriately in accordance with their agreements—

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs McMAHON: Thank you for the history lesson, again, but let us focus on 2023. What will happen is that we will lose our healthcare workers. We will lose them to interstate and overseas.

I want Queensland healthcare workers to know that when they strike an enterprise bargaining agreement with the Queensland government we will be honouring it and we will be paying it. At the public briefing the member for Mermaid Beach was having a few issues with the unforeseen expenditure and the fact that there was an enterprise bargaining agreement. In the hearing it was explained that, yes, there may have been a wages policy in place, but because it had not been agreed to at the point of the regular budget cycle it was not included and that money could not be appropriated until such time as that enterprise bargaining agreement had been reached.

Those on this side of the House might have a better understanding of how enterprise bargaining agreements work and the importance of workers signing on to those EBAs, but we cannot allocate money to agreements that have not yet been struck. Queensland Health did represent the biggest supplementary appropriation for the 2022-23 financial year. We on this side of the House believe that our health workers who, let's face it, have been doing a lot of the heavy lifting for Queensland over the past three to four years, deserve to be adequately paid. They deserve the enterprise bargaining agreement that was struck.

When those agreements are struck, it is entirely appropriate that funds are allocated. I thank the previous industrial relations minister and the health minister for ensuring we have the health workforce we have in Queensland and that we are doing our best to keep them in the Sunshine State to ensure we have an adequate health system. I note that there were a number of other unforeseen expenditures

across a range of departments. I have no doubt that other members will be making additional contributions in relation to those; however, I note that time for this bill is limited. Rather than take up my full time referring to historical budgets, election campaigns or throwing around campaigning ephemera, I will allow other members to contribute. Certainly, I thank the Treasurer for ensuring the committee was adequately briefed. I commend this bill to the House.