




Speech By
Hon. Amanda Camm

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

Record of Proceedings, 14 March 2025

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (SUPPLEMENTARY 2023-2024) BILL:
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 **Hon. AJ CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (Minister for Families, Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Child Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (4.48 pm): I am pleased to stand to speak in response to the appropriations bills, not only on behalf of the government, but also as a regional member of parliament who represents the incredible Whitsunday electorate.

Other speakers have outlined cost blowouts, in particular in relation to the Pioneer-Burdekin project. As locals on the ground, we knew that it was a hydro hoax. The members for Mackay and Burdekin will remember waiting with me for the arrival of former premier Palaszczuk, who flew in late to a police remembrance day. She then scurried off to announce the Pioneer-Burdekin pumped hydro project, which nobody had ever heard of. Nobody in the Mackay region, the Mirani electorate or the Whitsunday region had ever heard of it. The Yuwi people, the traditional custodians, had never heard of that project. The communities of Mackay, the Whitsundays and Mirani were never consulted or engaged on it. Over the past two years we have been misled by those opposite with the largest marketing campaign hoax, with the glossy brochures and the promise of renewable energy through the Pioneer-Burdekin pumped project that was going to give our state the electricity security that we need.

We saw the blatant disregard of those opposite in relation to the natural environment. Those opposite caused great stress in our communities of Eungella, Netherdale and Finch Hatton as people were forced to give up their livelihoods for nothing but a hoax and a wasteful disregard of Queensland taxpayers' money. That is why we now hold the seats of Mirani and Mackay. We should thank those opposite for being as blatant as they were because it is why regional Queensland took notice and it is why people across my community were happy to stand up, alongside our new members, to fight for their community.

In his contribution, the health minister outlined cost blowouts in his portfolio. I turn to the Mackay Hospital and Health Service and the upgrade project that was announced not once, not twice but three times. Over and over again, previous health ministers flew in to Mackay to announce the hospital expansion project. Those opposite have the worst record on health service delivery in my regional community of Mackay. They have shown a blatant disregard for women in Mackay, particularly those women who want to give birth safely in Mackay. We know what has been uncovered, through this bill and the work of the government, with regard to birthing services that were not funded by those opposite. A helipad was not funded by those opposite. Under a previous Labor government a helipad was not funded in our hospital build, even though we sold our airport to fund hospital expansions. That is how Labor economics works. There is no regard for the regions and certainly no understanding of how you plan and deliver a project on time and on budget.

Many members on this side of the House have outlined Labor's cost blowouts and failures to deliver road infrastructure across the regions. That was no more evident than with the delay, under two transport ministers, to deliver Hamilton Plains flood proofing in my electorate of Whitsunday. I am pleased that the tender is now underway and that the drainage works have already been completed. It

will mean that people across my electorate will not be cut off from hospital services. It will mean that in Airlie Beach, Cannonvale and Proserpine, children will be able to get to school. On this side of the House we care that children can access an education, particularly in times of wet weather. We care that people can get their children to school and that people can access basic goods and services that many take for granted.

I represent an incredible tourism region. We have seen a failure by those opposite to deliver on road upgrades, particularly on the Bruce Highway, meaning that in my community people who live in Airlie Beach and the Whitsundays can get cut off from the airport. When 800 people get stranded at the Whitsunday Coast Airport, it is because for over a decade those opposite decided not to invest in Bruce Highway upgrades, they decided not to invest in maintenance for the Bruce Highway and they decided not to flood-mitigate parts of the Bruce Highway to ensure our tourism industry can thrive. As I tell tourism industry operators, who are so pleased to see an LNP government, never fear because we will work with you. We will work across our portfolios to deliver so that we have a thriving tourism industry. I commend Minister Powell on his efforts already and for the multiple visits he has made to my electorate to engage with and revive tourism as part of our government's plan to deliver.

I will now speak to my portfolio. What a privilege it is to be the state's Minister for Child Safety and to head a department that every day is working hard to protect our most vulnerable children. When I was sworn in as the minister, from the first incoming briefings we uncovered things with regard to our workforce that I was so surprised at. Those opposite talk about their respect for the Public Service and the mission that they have led with regard to job safety for those in the Public Service; however, we discovered that 91 frontline staffing positions were not funded beyond Christmas. In Mount Isa, staff were crying in front of me because of their fear that we would not clean up the mess of those opposite. Ninety-one staff were going into Christmas knowing that their jobs were not funded in January because of those opposite. Those 91 staff were working to protect the most vulnerable children in this state. Those opposite are all high and mighty when they talk about how they care about the Public Service, but they have shown a blatant disregard for the Public Service and the department that I now oversee. We were pleased to be able to fund those positions.

With regard to residential care, those opposite left a \$461 million black hole. When Labor came to power in 2015, there were 663 children in the residential care system. Do members know how many there are today? As of September, there are 2,093 children. After four failed child safety ministers, one of whom no longer sits in the House because he lost his seat, we have been left with an absolute mess. We have a residential road map to nowhere. I am pleased to meet with the Treasurer and the Under Treasurer, who understand the black hole left by those opposite. We will work to reform the residential care system. We will work to ensure that children are protected, that they are safe and that they are not funnelled into a life of youth crime and the youth justice system left by those opposite. That is the mess that those opposite have left. There has been no investment—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): I remind members that there will be no quarrelling across the chamber. We are getting towards the end. Can we calm it down, thank you.

Ms CAMM: The previous government showed a blatant disregard for the most vulnerable children in this state with a revolving door of ministers who were never up to the task. They never wanted the portfolio. I am pleased that I can meet with every child safety officer across my department and tell them that I wanted this portfolio because I care about the children of this state and I care about the residential care system, which has been left broken by those opposite. We will reform it. We will invest. We will ensure that our most vulnerable children are protected. What we will not do is disregard Queenslanders' money. We will respect it and we will make sure it is invested in our next generation with purpose.