




Speech By
Hon. Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 26 June 2025

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. A LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers) (11.14 pm): I rise to speak to the Crisafulli government's first budget, a budget that lays the foundations for a fresh start that we promised the people of Queensland. The Crisafulli LNP government has done what we said we would do: we are delivering for Queenslanders. At a time of increasing challenges from natural disasters to the demands of our infrastructure, this budget reflects on our government's unwavering commitment: a commitment to delivering strong communities, building resilience and investing in people who make our state a great place to live. This is a budget that delivers for all Queenslanders: for our families, for our volunteers, for our frontline workers and for those who produce our food across this state. It is a budget that delivers where it matters the most. It addresses the neglect of 10 years of Labor's failures, where project overruns were everywhere, poorly scoped, badly managed and significantly underfunded or just not funded at all when it comes to many places outside of the Brisbane CBD.

Labor hid multibillion dollar blowouts on countless major projects including the Pioneer-Burdekin, which has now been cancelled, CopperString and Cross River Rail. Who can forget the eye-watering blowouts in the water space by the billions: Paradise Dam, Lake Macdonald, Burdekin Falls Dam and Somerset Dam. If it was not a blowout it was neglect for the regions. For nearly a decade Labor has neglected Western Queensland.

Just before I turn to my portfolios, I would like to highlight how the Crisafulli government is delivering a fresh start for the people of the Warrego electorate. I have fought for many elections for a CT scanner at the Charleville Hospital. It has now been funded by the Crisafulli government. I have been a constant campaigner for upgrades to roads in my electorate, and I am pleased to advise the House that the Roma-Condamine Road will have an allocation of \$5.29 million towards it. This is another road that I have fought for. Residents along that road have been waiting for 10 years for an upgrade and it is the Crisafulli government that is giving them a fresh start.

Similarly, with the business cases for the Eulo bridge replacement—that is a 90-year-old bridge—the Loudoun Bridge approaches that go out and flood quite regularly, and the Gums intersection upgrades. They were all ignored by Labor governments. They are now funded by the Crisafulli government. There is \$100,000 to develop the St George Airport master plan; 14 homes for frontline workers—teachers, nurses, police officers—in Roma and Charleville; \$600,000 to upgrade the Cunnamulla swimming pool; and \$450,000 to support the Quilpie Shire Council upgrade their Anzac Memorial Park—all funded by the Crisafulli government. In education, there is funding for a new multipurpose hall for Dalby State High School, new facilities and upgrades for Hannaford State School, Injune State School, Mitchell State School, Quilpie State School, Roma State College and Tara Shire State College. I do have a lot of schools in my electorate.

The Crisafulli government is delivering for the people of Warrego. We are delivering for education and we are delivering for the families in my electorate. We have promised safety where you live, a better lifestyle through a stronger economy, health services when you need them and a plan for Queensland's future, and that is what we are delivering.

As the Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers, my role is to empower councils and ensure water security and affordability; to ensure our frontline fires have the resources and equipment they need to keep Queensland safe; to ensure that we are there for Queenslanders when they are faced with natural disasters, from response to recovery and building back better—I reflect on the fact that there are 73 of 77 councils disaster declared in this state at the present time but I did not hear 'disaster recovery' once in the opposition leader's speech and I find that very troubling; and to recognise and support the selfless spirit of our volunteers.

This budget invests in empowering our councils because we know that strong councils mean that we will have stronger and more resilient communities. I look forward to continuing the equal, respectful and empowering relationship that the Crisafulli government has with our councils. Labor's decade of mismanagement has left our councils struggling to deliver the infrastructure and services they needed to keep their communities thriving. After 10 years of neglect, finally the Crisafulli government is delivering certainty and support for the local government sector with a permanent Works for Queensland program and a boost to betterment that will help communities build back better after natural disasters.

Local government will receive a major boost in this budget with more than \$18 million over four years to fund local government priority projects, including \$9.3 million for improvements to playgrounds like those in the electorate of the member for Lockyer, toilet blocks and car parking facilities. There is \$5.7 million to improve infrastructure in local communities, including upgrades to town halls and other community infrastructure. There is \$3 million for CCTV and security cameras in local communities.

At the 2024 state election, the Crisafulli government committed to making Works for Queensland a permanent program at \$100 million per year and ongoing, and we are delivering. This is the first time that councils have had that certainty and it is a great outcome for councils right across regional Queensland. Our commitment to ongoing funding for Works for Queensland provides certainty to councils to plan for and deliver projects, making local communities great places to live, work and raise a family, because councils should have the support they need to ensure that they can create livable and thriving communities.

We are securing Queensland's most precious resource—water. Whether it is safe drinking water in remote communities or long-term water infrastructure, this budget delivers the groundwork for a secure and sustainable water future. Unlocking water is key to delivering economic opportunity for our rural and regional communities, which is why we are delivering more water security than ever in this budget. Queenslanders deserve to know that their water sources are secure and drought resilient and that there is capacity for economic growth when they want it. Labor's mismanagement left Queensland's water infrastructure stagnated for nearly a decade, and councils have struggled to deliver the infrastructure and services they need to keep their communities thriving.

We are delivering on our election commitment to provide water security across the state with almost \$38 million to deliver business cases for the Water for Warrill Irrigation Project in the electorate of the Scenic Rim. We are building the new Barlil weir in the electorate of Nanango, and the Cooranga weir in the electorate of Callide, as well as five new or upgraded weirs on the Thomson River near Longreach in the electorate of Gregory. There is almost \$51 million over two years to deliver a 15 per cent discount for eligible irrigators to help make essential water resources more affordable for Queensland's primary producers.

More than \$41 million over five years will deliver vital upgrades to critical water and sewerage infrastructure in remote First Nations communities across the Torres Strait to improve health outcomes. We will invest \$34 million to deliver water supply improvements and infrastructure upgrades for the communities of Aurukun, Kowanyama and Woorabinda because all Queenslanders, no matter where they live, should have access to clean drinking water. With new weirs and water infrastructure and cost relief for irrigators, we are ensuring that every drop of water will be put to good use in growing our local economies.

When it comes to our fire and disaster response, Queenslanders know that the state has been significantly impacted and that the stakes are high. This budget begins the task of investing in more resilient communities so that we are ready when disaster strikes and our fires have the resources they need to do their job properly. This budget will deliver new or replaced fire stations in Beerwah, Greater Springfield, Gympie South, Caloundra and Boonah. We will also commence the delivery of replacement stations in Ayr, Highfields, Kingaroy and other future strategic areas as well as the site investigations and early scoping works for the replacement fire station at Hervey Bay. This will ensure that our hardworking frontline fires have access to the best facilities to respond to future emergencies.

We will also invest in Queensland Fire and Rescue to ensure firefighters are equipped with new and replacement trucks to enhance operational capability and response. The Rural Fire Service of Queensland will receive new and replacement trucks and more than \$13.2 million for stations, including \$1 million to commence work on the new or upgraded stations at Abbot Point, Bell Town and Mount Ossa. The Crisafulli government is delivering more than \$9 million for new operational equipment including specialised firefighting, scientific analysis and rescue equipment.

Firefighters can rest assured that they will have continued access to comprehensive workers compensation, which is something that Labor did not fund. This government is delivering \$15.7 million to support both paid and volunteer firefighters following a significant expansion of the presumptive legislation for the workers compensation scheme. Queensland fires were left underfunded and under-resourced under Labor, but we are committed to reversing that neglect to ensure that they will have what they need to keep Queenslanders safe. It is important to note that Labor did not fund presumptive WorkCover even though they changed the legislation.

Queenslanders have been hit hard by disasters this year and the Crisafulli government promised we would stand shoulder to shoulder with them during their response and recovery. The Crisafulli government is delivering on a key election promise, with \$40 million per year towards Queensland betterment funding. This will deliver high-priority betterment infrastructure projects, including funding towards raising Curzon Street Bridge at Rocklea and crucial flood mitigation measures in Laidley, as we promised. That is particularly important to the member for Lockyer and his electorate. This \$40 million a year investment is part of the Crisafulli government's \$450 million commitment over five years for the Queensland Resilience and Risk Reduction Program to improve the state's resilience to natural disasters. Betterment is the centrepiece of QRRRP as we improve the resilience of vital assets such as roads, bridges and water infrastructure in future disaster events. By not only repairing damaged assets but also building back better and to a stronger standard, we will make sure we are prepared for future disasters. That was a promise we made to Queenslanders and it is one we are delivering on.

At the heart of our response is, of course, our volunteers who are the quiet heroes of every crisis. This budget recognises their service, backs their efforts and restores the respect that they deserve.

The Crisafulli government is also ensuring that our rural and regional communities receive funding after a decade of neglect from Labor. That is why we are delivering a boost of \$500,000 to the Show Societies Grants Program, which will be shared equally between show societies across Queensland. This funding is the first increase in the Show Societies Grants Program funding since 2006. It recognises the vital role that agricultural shows play in our rural communities. I thank David Wilson, the President of the Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Shows, for his advocacy.

This budget is a blueprint for a government that listens, plans and delivers. The Crisafulli government's first budget sets a course for a better Queensland. This is just the beginning and we are getting on with the job of delivering for all Queenslanders.