




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE**

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

 **Dr O'SHEA** (South Brisbane—ALP) (2.05 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate of the Appropriation Bill 2025, the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2025 and the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. In reviewing the budget papers related to these bills, I thought about the needs of my community in South Brisbane as well as those of Queenslanders more broadly. There was a time when the budget came around and people would look to it to see what it meant for them in terms of their discretionary spending. Now with the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, many Queenslanders are looking to this budget hoping for assistance with essential expenses, and I fear the majority will be disappointed.

In their Red Shield report released last month, Salvation Army Australia laid bare the depth of economic pressure faced by thousands of families in our state. In a survey of community members who had accessed their crisis services in the past 12 months, the Salvation Army found that 83 per cent of respondents were living below the poverty line and 90 per cent reported financial stress in the past year. More than half of respondents could not pay electricity, gas or phone bills on time. One in six surveyed had experienced homelessness. About 40 per cent of renters and mortgage holders had slept in cars or on couches due to lack of money. Equally distressing, 62 per cent of parents skipped meals so their children could eat and 14 per cent reported sending their children to school hungry or without lunch.

These statistics reflect the experience of many of my constituents in South Brisbane. We have a community pantry at our electorate office, and every day we have residents in need who come in and quietly fill a bag with basic foodstuffs to help them survive another week.

When the Miles Labor government introduced the \$1,000 energy rebate last year, again and again community members would tell me what a huge difference that made to their lives. I remember one lady I met in a public housing complex who could not believe that she would finally be able to clear her electricity debt and kept checking with me that the \$1,000 rebate was actually real. I was very disappointed to learn of the government's decision to discontinue the \$1,000 energy rebate.

While I am pleased that the government will continue to provide some energy bill relief to vulnerable people like seniors, pensioners and concession card holders through the electricity rebate scheme, indexation of this rebate is only going to add an extra \$14 to the rebate this year, so it will be very tough for people this winter, with Labor's cost-of-living measures ending and no universal energy rebates for Queensland households.

The government has introduced a rather strangely named Supercharged Solar for Renters Plan, which will provide rebates of up to \$3,500 to eligible landlords for installing solar panels on their rental properties. The program is expected to help 6,500 households. I think this is a good initiative and I hope

it will eventually lead to a reduction in electricity bills for renters. Unfortunately, I could not find any detail about the criteria for eligibility for landlords, with the Queensland Treasury website stating—

Eligibility requirements will be established for applicants, dwelling types, products and installers. These will be released ahead of the program launch later this year.

As there will naturally be quite a lag between the solar panels being finally installed and when the tenants next receive their electricity bill, I would encourage the government to finalise the details of this scheme as soon as possible and launch the program to give some much needed relief to our renters.

I am very grateful that the government is committed to continuing the former Miles Labor government's 50-cent fares. Labor's 50-cent fares initiative continues to lead the nation, providing essential cost-of-living relief to Queenslanders as well as incentivising greater public transport use and reducing car usage, resulting in less congestion and emissions. This policy has been extremely popular with residents in my electorate, particularly with families, students and young workers. One young woman told me she was saving \$80 a week on fares—money she could then spend on food. 'This is what we need,' she said. 'Big, bold ideas that make a real difference in people's lives.'

Labor's \$1,000 energy rebate and 50-cent fares formed part of the biggest ever cost-of-living budget in Queensland's history. Motorists also benefited from a 20 per cent discount on vehicle registration fees. Unfortunately, the government has chosen not to extend the registration discount in this budget, so this cost-of-living relief will also end in September this year.

I am delighted that the government has chosen to continue Labor's \$200 FairPlay vouchers to assist with children's sports costs and that primary school parents in my electorate will receive the government's \$100 Back to School Boost next year. Paid directly to schools, this will be of some help to families coping with the cost of books, stationery, devices, uniforms and extracurricular activities.

As well as cost-of-living pressures, lack of housing and homelessness are major issues in my electorate. I am grateful that the 20 per cent funding uplift to specialist homelessness services, introduced across Queensland by Labor, has been funded and indexed for the next four years. With such high demands for these services, this will give certainty to the sector and assist with service planning and staff retention. I would like to acknowledge the hard work and compassion of Micah Projects, Emmanuel City Mission, St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army in supporting the homeless and vulnerable people in South Brisbane.

On both sides of this House we all want to make it easier for first home buyers to get a home of their own. We cannot accept that if parents are not able to help their children out financially they lose all hope of buying a home. I am very pleased that the government is introducing its Boost to Buy program. Similar to federal Labor's Help to Buy shared equity scheme, the program is available to 1,000 Queenslanders on low to moderate incomes over the next two years. The government will invest up to 30 per cent equity in new builds and 25 per cent for existing homes up to the value of \$1 million and buyers will only need a two per cent deposit. My question to the government is: if it is going to make real inroads in home ownership, why limit this program to two years and only 1,000 places?

In 2023 Labor doubled the first home owner grant to \$30,000, and it is wonderful that the government has chosen to extend this initiative for another 12 months. However, I would ask the government to increase the value of the home that may be bought or built with this grant from \$750,000 to \$1 million, in recognition of the increase in house prices and to bring the grant in line with the Boost to Buy program. I would also like the government to not limit the availability of this \$30,000 grant to only another 12 months but extend it indefinitely to give first home buyers certainty about this assistance as they save to buy a home.

With over 52,000 Queenslanders on the state's public housing waiting list, it is essential that we urgently increase our stock of social homes. When we need to be building thousands of homes to keep up with demand, it is worrying that the budget papers state that there are only 144 social homes in construction or under contract in the Brisbane central area. With increasing numbers of families sleeping in cars and tents this winter, the government needs an absolute focus on driving the delivery of social homes as well as providing support for residents moving into public housing. The transition from sleeping rough to community living can be challenging for some clients with complex mental health needs, and it is essential that the government recognises the need to fund more supportive housing as well as the introduction of CCTV in some public housing complexes to deter antisocial behaviour and avoid neighbour fatigue.

The income gap between being ineligible for social housing and being unable to afford the market rate of rent also needs to be addressed. Too many renters are being driven out of their community in South Brisbane by ever-increasing rents. In determining the distribution of public funds, I would ask the government to concentrate its efforts on delivering more affordable housing to rent and buy for our young people and key workers in the inner city where they want to live.

I welcome the government's allocation of funding to expand the CitySafe CCTV network across the inner-city suburbs. I have been advocating for the expansion of this network into South Brisbane to deter antisocial and criminal behaviour and improve community safety for residents and visitors to our vibrant, eclectic electorate and hope to see this initiative rolled out in South Brisbane soon.

Turning to education, I was pleased to see the budget includes funding for additional classrooms at Buranda State School in Woolloongabba in my electorate. This is a wonderful school with a strong sense of community, which has been led by principal Simon Vaseo for over a decade. The committed teaching staff deliver quality education to their students and are supported by a passionate and hardworking P&C.

Further investment in educational facilities in our area is required, however. The suburbs of West End and South Brisbane within my electorate are experiencing rapid growth and our local state schools are reaching capacity. The previous Labor government wisely invested in building Brisbane South State Secondary College, but population growth has continued and further planning investment is needed urgently. A new primary school in the South Brisbane and West End area is essential to address long-term growth trends, as is the provision of additional space at Brisbane State High School.

I am pleased to see the expansion to the Princess Alexandra Hospital with the addition of 249 beds begun under the former Labor government is continuing. There is mention in the budget of new car parking spaces at the hospital, which I know will be welcomed by staff and visitors alike, but there are no details of any timeline for this. As other members have mentioned, there are also no timelines in the budget for the completion of new hospitals, the expansion of existing hospitals, the new cancer centre or the provision of an additional 2,600 beds. I am also concerned that there is no funding set aside for a new spinal injuries unit at the Princess Alexandra Hospital and no mention in the budget of any funding for pill testing—either pop-up testing at festivals and other events or fixed-location pill testing, despite expert advice of the life-saving nature of this testing.

In my electorate of South Brisbane, public transport is essential for our primary and secondary school students to get to school, for our residents to get to work and to avoid congestion on our roads. Further investment is needed if our infrastructure is to keep up with the rapid growth we are experiencing in my community. South Brisbane is growing at more than double the average rate of the rest of Queensland. Increased bus services and a CityCat service for Kangaroo Point and a second CityCat terminal in West End are some of the essential transport projects my community needs, but I have seen no mention of these in the budget papers.

Another omission in the budget appears to be any funding provision for renovations to the Story Bridge. I welcome the Premier's very clear and emphatic statement in this House that there will not be a toll on the Story Bridge. However, I was disappointed that I could not find any allocation of moneys in this budget to repair the bridge so it can open again to pedestrians and cyclists as well as prepare for the demands on the bridge with the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games.

I noticed a mention of the Visy site at South Brisbane in the budget and that it was being transferred to the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. I would request that the Deputy Premier engages in early community consultation for the future of this important site to our community, with its potential for much needed green space, an educational facility or affordable housing.

I was excited to hear about the government's upgrades to more than 100 community club facilities in the lead-up to the 2032 games, helping to support our next generation of athletes; however, I could not find any mention of clubs in my electorate. I would like to put in a word for the amazing athletes in South Brisbane, whether at Eastern Suburbs Football Club, Kangaroo Point Rovers Football Club, South Brisbane Sailing Club or Souths Rugby League Club, to name but a few.

I was also very excited to find a section in the budget papers titled 'Supporting our local communities'. However, when I read through the list, I thought initially our residents would have to move to Moggill for support given the generous number of groups that had received support there. Then I was relieved to see that Rosies has received funding to expand its outreach service across inner-city Brisbane. I thank the government for supporting such an essential service to the most vulnerable in our community.