




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

Record of Proceedings, 26 August 2025

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; STATE
DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND WORKS COMMITTEE, REPORT**

 **Ms MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (4.22 pm): I am pleased to provide a contribution to the committee report on the Appropriation Bill 2025. I thank all members of the committee for their deliberations through this process, particularly those members of the committee who kept calling female shadow ministers argumentative when we were simply seeking answers. In particular, I acknowledge the many public servants involved in the budget estimates process. Preparing for an estimates hearing is an important, but significant, task in the preparation of briefs and information and I recognise this effort.

In the short time that I have, I would like to concentrate on a few key issues that arose in the public works estimates hearing. What became quite evident is that the government believes it should be judged very differently to the former Labor government when it comes to the funding of initiatives and programs. Whilst their narrative this term, and certainly during this budget process, has been that Labor should have budgeted years and years out for particular programs or infrastructure, they do not accept this when they themselves do not budget in the forwards. It is a particular hypocrisy that is galling, to say the least. The minister previously said exactly the same thing. We saw evidence of this when it came to the funding of government employee housing.

When Labor was in power we funded a capital program of \$677.5 million to build 439 additional government employee homes between 2022 and 2027. Despite an acknowledged ongoing demand for government employee housing, the LNP government has not contributed one additional cent beyond the 2026-27 financial year. When asked why no funding was in the forwards, the minister was quick to point out that there will be budgets before the program expires. Yes, but this is their budget. They could have put that money into the forwards at any time, but they have chosen not to. We know how important it is for Queensland government frontline service staff to have access to secure, cost-effective accommodation in regional and remote areas of Queensland where they are needed most. These are for our ambulance workers, nurses, police officers and teachers. The LNP government has claimed to be doing what is right for frontline services. They have claimed they are backing the regions, yet when pen hits paper they have let them down. Last year David Crisafulli promised Queenslanders he would deliver a plan that would improve housing affordability and availability, yet he now expects our nurses, teachers and police officers to take up the very few rentals that are left in remote and regional Queensland. We know these areas have some of the tightest vacancy rates across the state, and the government has decided to just wait for Labor's money to run out.

The director-general confirmed there is an ongoing demand for government employee housing, particularly in rural and remote areas. It was also confirmed that agencies have reported instances where a lack of available employee housing has delivered or prevented recruitment. This is very concerning. At a time when the government seems to be backing away from their election commitment to give our nurses and teachers nation-leading pay and better working conditions, it seems they now also want to reduce their living conditions.

During the hearing we also heard from the new CEO of the QBCC. I extend my thanks to him for providing the committee with some important information regarding workloads and case management issues within the organisation. It would seem that the QBCC is currently operating with a significant vacancy rate, which is most concerning. The CEO advised they currently have 674 full-time equivalent staff on the books but are budgeted for 765. That would calculate to approximately 91 roles that are not filled or are yet to be filled. It is perhaps not surprising to hear that at the time of the hearing the QBCC had 558 cases pending allocation to an investigator and 437 active investigations on foot. Whilst I recognise the work underway to manage these workloads, including through digital and productivity improvements, many started under the previous Labor government. That is something this side of the House will be monitoring closely.

I was pleased to hear the CEO discuss the measures they are taking to support QBCC staff with mental health supports. It is clear that, unless they plug the vacancies, the workload will continue to climb and mental health will suffer. This is even before referencing the mental anguish so many home owners and builders are still enduring from their day-to-day interactions with the agency—something this government claims to be fixing.

Finally, I note the minister's comment during the public hearing that he had invited the member for Mulgrave to visit the Cairns Rapid Accommodation and Apprenticeship Centre, RAAC, to see 'the modular homes that are being constructed for First Nations communities across this state'. I will once again formally request the minister to allow me to visit the RAAC in my role as shadow minister for public works when I next travel to Cairns. So far the minister has denied me access. I would hope that he will reconsider his decision, given he has given LNP members visitation rights.

I thank the Labor members of the committee for their substantial statement of reservation to the committee's report and thank opposition staff for their support.