




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

Record of Proceedings, 13 March 2025

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (SUPPLEMENTARY 2023-2024) BILL;
APPROPRIATION (SUPPLEMENTARY 2023-2024) BILL**

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (3.57 pm): I rise to talk about the appropriation bills. Members will have to do without the shadow treasurer for a little while but they have me instead. Here is my CV.

Ms SIMPSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. It is against the protocols of the House to refer to members not being in the House, whether it is temporary or not. This is a point of order that is accepted under the protocols. I seek your ruling, please.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McDonald): There is no point of order. The member on his feet was referring to the fact that you would have to put up with him for the moment.

Mr WHITING: I thought that was going to be her point of order, but that is okay. As I said in the last sitting week, I reckon Labor are the best economic managers in Australia—absolutely! Members heard me say during the last sitting week that across Australia inflation is down, interest rates are down and job opportunities are up. That is because Labor want the economy to work for Queenslanders—ordinary Queenslanders, not millionaire donors like the ones feted by Peter Dutton the other night. While we were filling up sandbags, he was filling up moneybags. Members have heard it said before. Labor wants the Queensland budget to work for ordinary Queensland working families—people like Wayne, the plumber who lives next door to me, and Lauren, the teacher who lives over the road from me. They are the ones who need the economy to work for them. Labor is the best economic manager for the people—not millionaires.

Government members interjected.

Mr WHITING: I know the LNP are not going to like this but these appropriation bills show the healthy position we left for this incoming government. Members will hear a lot about debt and the like, but I will point out the things that are contained in these appropriation bills. Net debt in the 2023-24 financial year was halved, from about \$12.2 billion to \$5.7 billion, and that net debt is lower than in the last year of the Newman government.

We have heard about fiscal vandalism from the other side in this debate. I would like to know if halving that net debt is included in their definition of 'economic vandalism' or 'fiscal vandalism'. Let's look at the LNP approach. The LNP started their term talking down the economy of Queensland. They juiced up the budget with \$23 billion in allowances and, after the Treasurer's update, S&P revised their outlook for Queensland's credit rating. What they are doing is making political points and looking for political leverage. They are not doing anything that gives economic leverage to help the people of Queensland and we have seen more of that again today. They are not focused on the future; they are focused on the past. They are focused on Labor, the party, not Queensland, the people. That is their focus and honourable members will hear that continually throughout this debate.

One of the points I want to make is that—and this will be a revelation for some of the new LNP members—many of their priority projects are going to be under threat because the Treasurer keeps talking down the Queensland economy. These members are going to have to explain to their electorate what will happen to their projects when they are cut or pushed back in the budget. Let me give an example. I refer to the members for Kawana, Maroochydore and Caloundra, and ask: what will happen to the Sunshine Coast rail? I think we can see what is going to happen to that promise. They promised they would deliver that. What is going to happen to that? They are going to have to front up to their constituents if that promise is broken.

What about the member for Hervey Bay? As the member for Bundaberg has said, he keeps saying he wants a new hospital in Hervey Bay where the TAFE site is located currently. How is he going to explain to his constituents when that does not get up? We have also heard about the Coomera Connector. What is the member for Coomera going to do if this project is cut or pushed back or, heaven forbid, a toll is put on it because the Treasurer keeps talking down the economy and the fiscal position of Queensland?

The member for Maryborough has promised to build a roundabout on the Bruce Highway. How is that going to be funded? Is that project going to last? What is going to happen if there are cuts to the train-building program in Maryborough? How is he going to explain that? I also point out that today the Deputy Premier talked about how no-one is going to be left behind. He left the member for Maryborough behind when he travelled to Hervey Bay this morning. He was left behind. Why did the Deputy Premier want to take up one member but not the other?

There are cuts coming in the budgetary process and the LNP members will know where they stand with the Premier when they see their pet projects or preferred projects cut or pushed back. They will know what kind of future they have or what kind of future the Premier thinks they will have in this parliament by what happens to their projects. Methinks those cuts are coming.

Mr Vorster: Methinks you protest too much.

Mr WHITING: We have a lot of Shakespearean experts on my left all of a sudden.

Mr Vorster: All of a sudden? I've been here the whole time.

Mr WHITING: By the pricking of my thumb, something wicked this way comes, I do believe.

Mr Vorster: There's something rotten in the state of Queensland under your watch.

Mr WHITING: I am devastated by one of the three witches of the Gold Coast. You can figure out who the other two are.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McDonald): Member for Burleigh, there will be no quarrelling across the chamber.

Mr WHITING: I want to point out that if honourable members are looking at the LNP approach to budgeting and appropriations there will be no cost-of-living relief for Queenslanders under the LNP. That electricity rebate—\$1,000 going to each family—was a lifesaver for so many of them. That was a \$2 billion return on those assets. The electricity transmission and the major generators we own are assets that made a return to Queenslanders. What about the 20 per cent discount on rego that we brought in? Once again, that was very much welcomed by working Queenslanders. Then there are the FairPlay vouchers. We have not heard anything about them. Gary from the Redcliffe Hockey Club asked me, 'What's happening with them? We need them.' 'I don't know,' I said. 'I don't know what this mob are doing with them.' They were a real bonus. Those FairPlay vouchers that we gave last year were really helping kids get back into sport.

The big one, of course, is the 50-cent fares from the '50-cent fare' man himself. I point out that when that was announced, one LNP member, who is still in the chamber, labelled it a con job. I think the member for Mermaid Beach talked about it in his newsletter as being unsustainable or something like that. It is really interesting that their heart is not in this one measure that delivers more than anything else in cost-of-living relief for ordinary working Queenslanders.

Queenslanders are crying out to keep their cost-of-living relief measures. This government is not listening to them. They are not dedicated to that. We heard the LNP say yesterday that we squandered the money that was brought in. Was that an example of squandering the money—money going to ordinary working Queenslanders on electricity, money going to help their kids participate in sport, money to help them get 50-cent fares? Is that an example of the squandering that Labor did? When Labor spends money on ordinary working people the LNP thinks it is squandering money.

If honourable members listen to the LNP about the increased cost in this budgetary process, they will see that the LNP always think it is the result of working people being paid too much money. Construction workers are overpaid, they say. They take too much time off. There are too many costly conditions. They have too many expectations or their expectations are too high. Remember what the member for Burnett said when talking about Queensland nurses? He said that they had unrealistic expectations.

I want to conclude by saying that the budget services the ordinary working people of Queensland: the nurses, the plumbers and the teachers. The budget should deliver support for them and deliver cost-of-living relief to them as well. The Queensland budget does not serve the interests of the millionaire donors of the LNP.