




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (SUPPLEMENTARY 2023-2024) BILL:
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 **Mrs KIRKLAND** (Rockhampton—LNP) (12.30 pm): I rise to speak in the cognate debate on the supplementary appropriation bills, which shine a light on the mismanagement of the previous Labor government and their incapacity to manage Queenslanders' money with the good stewardship expected of them in this high office of government. A budget is a budget.

These bills are necessary to authorise the unforeseen expenditure from 2023-24—unforeseen expenditure of \$1.128 billion. It is the final part of three necessary appropriations totalling a massive \$9.5 billion of overspend in the last financial year alone. As our Treasurer has said many times, this bill is the full stop on the story of Labor's 10 years of fiscal vandalism. This \$9.5 billion overspend includes two unforeseen expenditures of \$2.267 billion in the Cheaper Power (Supplementary Appropriation) Act 2024 and \$6.154 billion contained in the Appropriation Act 2024. There is a great deal unforeseen here—a lack of vision, a lack of planning, a lack of management and, clearly, a lack of proper resourcing.

I would like to break things down for the members of the opposition, who seem to think \$9.5 billion of blowouts is okay—nothing to see here, nothing to report, nothing to explain to the taxpayers of Queensland. One billion dollars is \$1,000 million. Here is how I explain this to my grandchildren, for they want to know why for years they will be paying down this mess. They will be paying for the debts incurred by the previous Labor government. They are trying to understand just how much overspend there was. I tell them, 'Well, if you saved \$1,000 per day, it would take you 2,740 years to get to \$1 billion.' I tell them, 'If each step you take is around one metre, one billion steps will take you around the circumference of the earth 40,075 times.' That is one billion. We are talking about 9½ times that. It is a disgrace.

This blowout of unforeseen expenditure is demonstration of an incompetent administration unable to manage Queenslanders' hard-earned money and unable to deliver on the core responsibilities of a state government such as health, housing and education. Unforeseen expenditure has already been approved on two occasions and this is now the third appropriation, exposing Labor's poor budget management and their state of chaos and crisis. That is 11.6 per cent over their budget.

The previous Labor government then had the audacity to go to the polls in October 2024 misleading the people of Queensland that they could actually afford their pub dinner ideas such as state owned service stations, state owned medical practices, state delivered school lunches and a state owned energy supplier. They even announced jubilantly that they would borrow an additional \$33 billion. The *Financial Review* called Labor's last budget a clown show. That is a show where you keep handing over money and shoving white balls down the throats of turning heads, hoping to win a prize. The interest on \$9.9 billion in the forward estimates is over \$27,000 per day.

The former treasurer broke his 'no new or increased taxes' promise—a promise he made 26 times—and then collected \$70 billion more revenue than he forecast in his first budget less than four years before. He left Queenslanders with record debt, record deficits and a record interest bill, at the same time as there were record numbers of the sick waiting on ramps, the homeless sleeping in cars and victims of Queensland crime crisis.

In Rockhampton, our community has sat back waiting for over 10 years for investment into infrastructure. We even had a delegation of passionate business owners on their own merit—sick and tired of broken promises—do a road trip to Canberra to bring attention to the continued delays in development and funding for the Rockhampton Ring Road. It was meant to be finished this year, but because of the previous state Labor government's back and forth delays it never even got off the ground, despite being spoken of and approved in 2014.

The debt, deficit and deception that underscored the previous Labor government during their 10 years of chaos and crisis is more than disappointing; it shows they were utterly delinquent in their duty owed to the people of this state. That is why I stand here. The people of my electorate, well known as a Labor stronghold, have spoken out. In disgust they have spoken out.

Mrs Frecklington: Not anymore.

Mrs KIRKLAND: I will take that interjection. They were sick of losing loved ones on the underfunded and not-fit-for-purpose Bruce Highway and fatigued from the continued failure of the previous Labor government to address rising crime and homelessness within the region. All the while, the previous Labor government was throwing money on fool's errands such as the Pioneer-Burdekin hydro project and a speculative hydro project. Who can forget the Wellcamp quarantine facility—another fine example of their wasteful spending, illustrating a reckless pattern that has led to the need for this third appropriation bill in one calendar year?

From Rockhampton we sat and watched shaking our heads in utter disbelief as projects in the south-east continued to blow out, further infuriating us as we considered that that could have paid for a PET/CT scanner, a new hospital emergency department or an expansion of our overly cramped police station. It could have built some social and affordable housing or funded the needed upgrades of the Bruce Highway.

Those identified blowouts continue to include: Cross River Rail; Gold Coast Light Rail; the hospital capacity expansion program; CopperString; Pioneer-Burdekin—that one is up from \$12 billion to \$36.8 billion; and the Borumba pumped hydro project, up from \$14.2 billion to \$18 billion. It is eye-watering. As if that were not enough, the previous Labor government then left giant black holes of discontinuation of critical service delivery funding in such things as child safety and Queensland Health programs—perpetuating their deception of Queensland people.

It has all been a game of smoke and mirrors from the previous Labor government that has made a complete mockery of the budget process, attempting to trick the people of Queensland into believing they had it all under control when in reality they were spiralling out of control. Even the Standard & Poor's Global ratings report talked of Labor's waning fiscal discipline and looser fiscal discipline which was eroding the buffer in Queensland's rating.

The Crisafulli government has inherited this mess and yet are already well on the way through a measured and considered approach, sorting the wheat from the chaff to take steps that will improve the budget. Sanity has prevailed with the Crisafulli government cancelling the \$36.8 billion Pioneer-Burdekin hydro hoax, pausing BPIC—saving the budget \$17 billion to 2030—and opting to not provide significantly more than \$1 billion in equity and grants for the speculative hydrogen project. We are showing respect for taxpayers' money.

These appropriation bills today are necessary to seek formal authorisation for specified amounts in each bill that the former treasurer, the member for Woodridge, paid from the Consolidated Fund for unforeseen expenditure that occurred in the 2023-24 financial year. This exposes the previous Labor government's promiscuity with Queensland taxpayers' money and discounts the opposition from ever being able to be trusted again. I commend the bills to the House.