




Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE, REPORT

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (8.21 pm): That was a great end to a speech. The estimates process is meant to give Queenslanders clear and honest answers from their government, to shine a light on decisions that affect their lives, their jobs and their communities. However, as we have heard tonight from this side of the House, this year's estimates revealed a troubling pattern from the Crisafulli LNP government: a lack of transparency, a refusal to take responsibility and a clear disregard for regional Queensland.

Let us begin with the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program, which is a major project for our transport network and a vital source for jobs in Maryborough and on the Fraser Coast. This was a Labor initiative designed to build trains in Queensland, by Queenslanders and for Queenslanders. It was about more than transport; it was about manufacturing, local jobs in regional Queensland and regional growth for our community.

However, under the LNP, the program has literally gone off track. At estimates we heard the minister say that the first train is on schedule for delivery in 2027. However, the same day that he made that commitment the department's website stated that it would arrive for testing in late 2026. The director-general later confirmed that the minister's version means there will be a one-year delay in the manufacturing program. This is not just a clerical error; it is either a serious oversight or a deliberate attempt to downplay the delay that is coming for trains in Queensland. Either way, we deserve the truth and we do not deserve the spin. When asked for a full delivery timeline, which was what we should have, the minister could not provide one. Still there is no confirmation on whether the Torbanlea construction site will be finished by the end of 2025, as originally promised. This is not a minor delay. It creates real uncertainty for workers and communities that have backed in this project from day one.

However, it is not just the trains. Across the estimates hearings we saw the same pattern of confusion, contradiction and a failure to deliver. On coal royalties, the minister refused to say whether Queensland's progressive royalty system would remain after 2028 even though he has privately told industry stakeholders that a new model is being looked at. We have one message delivered in public and another message delivered to stakeholders behind closed doors. That is not transparency in Queensland; that is wordplay and it damages trust. Certainly it damages not only this government but also our entire resources sector.

We also saw the return of old-school cronyism. Ian Davies, an LNP donor, was given a consultancy worth \$187,500 for 25 days work. I must admit, that is a pretty good gig if you can get it. That is nearly \$7,500 a day of taxpayers' money going to someone with direct political ties to the LNP. That is public money, not party funds. While regional services are being cut in Queensland, that kind of spending is simply indefensible. That is why we called out the LNP during the estimates process.

Still there is no concrete plan for the future of the Mount Isa copper smelter, which is a major employer in Western Queensland. They have axed the Collaborative Exploration Initiative, which

supported investment in critical minerals in that area and was needed for the future of the town. These are not isolated decisions. They are choices that undermine jobs, discourage investment in Western Queensland and weaken, if not decimate, regional communities.

What about broader regional development? We learned that the successful Building our Regions program, which I was so proud to champion, has been quietly scrapped. The Queensland Battery Industry Strategy is also gone, without even basic consultation between the Deputy Premier and his own ministers. Labor will continue to hold this LNP government to account and we will continue to fight for jobs not only in South-East Queensland but right across regional Queensland.