




Speech By  
**Jennifer Howard**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (4.57 pm): I rise to speak on the supplementary appropriation bills for 2023-24. I note that the Labor opposition supports providing supply to the government. I would like to take the opportunity to note that, despite the Premier and the Treasurer assuring Queenslanders during the state election that they would restore fiscal discipline and tackle debt and spending, they have provided no plan or strategy on how they will do it. They have nothing to back up their words.

**Ms Grace:** No detail whatsoever.

**Ms HOWARD:** No detail. I will take that interjection. Once they got into government they pulled out their budget update in January and juiced it up with \$23 billion in allocated expenses that gave no details or plan on how it would be spent. There is also the cost-of-living relief for Queenslanders.

Their political pointscoring put our state credit rating at risk and it resulted in S&P Global revising their outlook for Queensland's credit rating to negative. This is an expensive game for the LNP to be playing. It has increased our borrowing costs and given Queenslanders no clue what the LNP will do to relieve cost-of-living pressures or restore fiscal discipline.

The Treasurer, in introducing these appropriation bills to parliament, pulled another stunt to score cheap political points. He and the LNP used a fairly routine supply bill to play politics and to attack the Labor opposition for a supposed \$9 billion blowout. Unforeseen expenditure, which is what we are debating here today, is not a blowout. The Acting Under Treasurer advised the committee of just that—unforeseen expenditure is not a blowout. It is incurred when a department has needed more appropriation than has been provided by the original appropriation bill for a year. For example, additional appropriation may be needed to respond to emergent issues, implement government policy or reflect a change in timing of Commonwealth payments or project delivery. Some \$2 billion of the unforeseen expenditure in 2023-24 was delivering vital cost-of-living relief to Queenslanders. As we heard the member for Sandgate and others on this side of the House say, all Queenslanders benefited from that.

For the last several years Queenslanders have been reeling from high interest rates, skyrocketing rental prices and inflated prices for everyday goods and services. The \$1,000 electricity rebates our Labor government provided last year were a godsend to many of our constituents. Many of them have been asking if they will receive a rebate again this year. They need it. The rebates were delivered as part of the cheaper power act, included as part of the supplementary appropriations for the 2023-24 financial year. Does the Treasurer consider this cost-of-living relief a blowout?

The Treasurer also remarked in his introductory speech that expenditure of \$1.85 billion from the former department of energy and climate was to cover Labor's blowouts across a string of energy products—one of which is the Swanbank Battery in Ipswich. Once finished, the Swanbank Battery will store two hours of clean energy to dispatch during times of peak demand. The Swanbank big battery, based at Swanbank's Clean Energy Hub, sits on the site of two former coal-fired power stations. It is

now a site showcasing the clean energy technology revolution and is positioned in Ipswich at the forefront of renewable energy research and investment. How can this critical energy infrastructure be considered a blowout? Battery technology is essential to deliver reliable and consistent energy supply in our state.

The LNP government is politicising appropriations legislation and labelling unforeseen expenditure as 'Labor's blowout' when it is anything but that. We will likely see state government departments incur unforeseen expenditure in the wake of ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred. Natural disasters are becoming more frequent and intense in Queensland and they cannot be predicted at the beginning of each financial year. Queenslanders rightly expect state government departments to help them out before, during and after natural disasters to aid in their recovery.

In February 2022, appropriation bills provided for unforeseen expenditures relating to COVID in 2020 and 2021. The November 2022 appropriation bill provided for unforeseen expenditures relating to COVID and the significant rainfall and flooding event Queensland saw in February-March 2022. These were not blowouts. Similarly, we will again see unforeseen expenditure relating to Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

I want to finish by noting that the Report on State Finances shows that Queensland's net debt in the 2023-24 financial year more than halved—from an estimated \$12.2 billion to \$5.7 billion. That was the last financial year of a Labor government. That net debt was lower than in the last budget that the LNP Newman government handed down in 2014. In September last year, S&P Global affirmed Queensland's AA+ stable rating. They could see that the Labor government had a clear and responsible economic plan.

Now that the LNP are in government, our state's credit rating has been downgraded. The LNP's only plan was to play politics which has risked hurting our state's economy. When S&P downgraded our credit rating, the LNP gloated about it even though it will clearly hurt Queenslanders. Why should the LNP worry about that when the aim of the game is to score cheap political points against Labor?

The people of Queensland deserve a government that provides certainty for their future. A lot of them are now worried that LNP's gloomy spin on our economy and government finances is just a way to set the scene for cuts to come in the budget. The people in my electorate of Ipswich want certainty that there will be state government services there for them in times of need. Many of my constituents are vulnerable and rely on these services.

Ipswich is also the fastest growing LGA in Queensland and we need to deliver more infrastructure to cope with our growing population like roads, hospitals, schools and public transport. Most importantly, my constituents need to be assured that they will get the support they need from their government when they are at their most vulnerable—for instance, after natural disasters like ex-Cyclone Alfred. Finally, the LNP government needs to commit to real cost-of-living relief for my constituents and for all of Queensland.