



Speech By  
**Joan Pease**

**MEMBER FOR LYTTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 27 August 2025


## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

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#### **Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

#### **Appropriation Bill**

#### **Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee, Report**

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (4.54 pm): The recent budget estimates hearing revealed in no uncertain terms a government more interested in spin than substance, particularly when it comes to our small business sector. In fact, the Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business seems more interested in lampooning these days as a DJ, so perhaps—may I call him—DJ Crony Connect should focus more on his job and spend less time dropping beats and more time dropping the answers that small businesses are seeking.

The minister could have shown that the LNP government values and understands a sector that contributes \$131 billion to our economy. He had an opportunity to show Queensland's 495,000 small businesses that this government listens and understands our small businesses which contributes over \$131 billion to the economy and creates nearly 1.1 million jobs. Instead, what we saw was evasion, excuses and a refusal to confront the real issues facing small and family enterprises across the state.

Perhaps the most damning of all was the evidence given by the director-general himself, a former Howard government minister's chief of staff who, as I recall, gave a clear intent to apologise for the failure in delivering on-time payment to small businesses in his own department—yes, that is right, this new department. He stated, 'I think 88.23 per cent was the department's response to achieving the payment of small businesses on time.' He went on to state, 'I do not actually think that that is good enough for the department.'

This is no small matter. Between the third and fourth quarter of last financial year, 11 departments increased their number of late invoices to small businesses. That is money Queensland's small operators are owed—money that they rely on to pay staff, order stock and keep the lights on. When confronted, the minister squirmed and sought to shift responsibility elsewhere. This is not leadership. This is buck-passing. Small business owners deserve a clear answer and a plan. They got neither.

The government promised a fresh start, but this department has gotten off to a false start on late payments in his own newly created department to guarantee this policy.

Of course, Minister Bates's budget statement was, 'The era for jobs for mates is over,' yet the LNP's new Small Business Advisory Council looks like an LNP family barbecue with a name tag printer. Clearly, resident DJ Crony Connect did not get that memo—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Martin): Order! I will pull you up there, member. Can you please use correct titles.

**Ms PEASE:** Thank you very much. The minister clearly did not get that memo. The appointment of Mr Phil Di Bella, a well-known LNP donor, who publicly argued for the abolition of penalty rates, was appointed to the new council. The minister claimed the council was a 'good cross-section' of the community—just not regional communities; he got rid of all of those members. He also claimed he was not aware that Mr Di Bella was an LNP donor. This is cronyism dressed up as consultation. Obviously, our resident minister only plays requests from his mates.

If the minister's advisory group was embarrassing, the CCTV grant program was humiliating. In Bundaberg, the government used a small local business as the backdrop for its \$40 million Secure Communities Partnership announcement, yet when the business owner later sought to apply, he was told that he was ineligible.

I asked the minister directly was he aware that the Premier had stood beside a business and encouraged them to apply, only for that business to be ruled out? His response was a masterclass in waffle. He spoke about criteria, about value for money, about processes, but never once accepted responsibility. I spoke personally to the owner of that small business in question. He was used by the Premier for a press conference and discarded when the TV cameras left, shutting the door in his face. This story is an analogy for this government—all spin and no substance.

The hearing also laid bare the consequences of the government's reckless cuts to renewable energy projects and health infrastructure in the regions. When I tabled a report from the Clean Energy Council noting that local cafes, pubs and suppliers all benefit from large projects, the director-general could only concede the point. The minister, however, refused to answer whether he had provided any advice to colleagues about the impact that these cancellations may have on small businesses. Regional economies are crying out for support, yet this government chooses ideology over industry. I walk into townships and regional cities in this state and each and every time they raise these issues with me.