




Speech By
Jonty Bush

MEMBER FOR COOPER

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (SUPPLEMENTARY 2023-2024) BILL;
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 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (5.14 pm): The passing of these appropriation bills is crucial to keeping Queensland moving. As the shadow treasurer has stated, we will be supporting the bills. These bills finalise appropriations for the 2023-24 financial year, but I believe it is important to draw to the attention of the House the significant increase in unforeseen expenditure. This is the Crisafulli government's first demonstration of its fiscal management. They have intentionally inflated this additional \$28 billion in unforeseen expenditure.

Context matters. During the October state election the LNP campaigned on two key themes: law and order; and being the smallest political target possible. Their strategy was to avoid scrutiny, deflect debate and conceal what they would do if they were actually elected. That approach led to an unusual commitment: to adopt the Miles Labor government's budget in its entirety. It is remarkable that a party aspiring to govern would be satisfied with what is essentially submitting someone else's homework, but that is exactly what they did. That commitment has now locked the Crisafulli government into a near impossible position: they pledged not to cut Public Service jobs or sell assets to maintain the Miles Labor government's Big Build and to preserve services, all while promising to keep costs lower than under Labor.

They knew this was an impossible promise. It is becoming even more untenable as Queensland's coal exports decline and with them revenue from Labor's progressive coal royalty scheme. Every economist, every political commentator, has observed that their promise was unsustainable in the face of rising population growth, increasing construction costs and a substantial infrastructure pipeline, yet what we have seen since the election is an attempt by this government to rewrite history. Instead of being transparent about their own fiscal policy, the Treasurer has engaged in a media strategy, leaking stories about budget blowouts and deliberately inflating costs by an additional \$28 billion to shift the blame onto Labor.

Make no mistake: this is the LNP's fiscal policy at work. Their attempts to avoid accountability are political gamesmanship of the worst kind, and Queenslanders see right through it. The consequences have been immediate and serious. Queensland has maintained a AA+ stable credit rating for 15 years under successive Labor governments. This rating was reaffirmed by S&P Global in September last year, yet following the Premier and Treasurer's politically motivated budget update S&P has revised Queensland's credit outlook from stable to negative, signalling increased risk to our future economic standing. This is the legacy of the first Crisafulli Mid-Year Financial and Economic Review. Having promised to adopt Labor's budget, the LNP's first months in office have been spent fabricating a fiscal crisis to justify future cuts—a page out of the Campbell Newman playbook—and that parallel has been noticed. As economist John Quiggin noted—

You could pretty much have cut and pasted their report from 2012 ... the same warnings of disaster ... and yet, no disaster emerged then, just as it won't now.

The Premier made a series of commitments. He promised to set clear performance indicators for his ministers but instead has produced vague documents lacking measurable outcomes. He promised to continue programs, and this week we have learned that he has used the cover of Tropical Cyclone Alfred to cut the Independent Ministerial Advisory Committee, which was set up to make recommendations to government on driving down youth crime and greater supports for victims. He promised no Public Service cuts and no additional taxes, but he is now manoeuvring to break these commitments. We are already seeing the consequences: infrastructure and capital works are being cut; Queensland Health's workplace attraction incentives have been abandoned; gender clinics have been paused; and critical infrastructure upgrades have been halted. This is just the beginning. The MYFER is laying the groundwork for further service cuts, public sector job losses and broken promises. We already have Peter Dutton on record pledging to cut 36,000 Public Service jobs if elected federally, so we know it is in the LNP's DNA.

On this side of the House, we will always champion public services, public assets and the dedicated Queenslanders who deliver them. The committee report identifies increased appropriations for essential departments including Queensland Health, Education, Housing, Transport and Child Safety. These are vital agencies providing critical services, and I want to take this opportunity to thank our hardworking public servants, particularly in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

Ms Pugh: Hear, hear!

Ms BUSH: Thanks, Jess. I really welcome the increased funding for education under the National School Reform Agreement, particularly for students with disabilities. Inclusion only works when it is properly funded so that every student and teacher has the support they need to be safe and to succeed. Additional funding has also been allocated to Child Safety, primarily due to increased costs in out-of-home care. Rather than continuing to expand this budget line, we really should focus on reducing demand for these services through proactive investment in early intervention and family support programs. Keeping families safe and together has to be the goal.

The bill authorises additional funding for Queensland Corrective Services primarily to cover funding for recruitment of operational employees for the Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre, built infrastructure safety and security. Again, the focus here needs to be on driving down offending and exploring options that are both safer for communities and more cost effective because we know that prisons are wildly expensive and usually do not work to reduce recidivism.

This bill also funds the cheaper power act introduced by the Miles Labor government to deliver a \$1,000 electricity rebate to every Queensland household. This relief was welcomed by families in my community. Even those who were at the time managing their bills told me how it eased that financial pressure at home allowing them to afford a takeaway meal or repair their car and to support local businesses in doing so. We are deeply disappointed that the Premier has failed to continue this cost-of-living relief at a time when Queenslanders are still struggling. This was a practical, effective policy made possible by keeping our energy assets in public hands, and many in my community are angry about these future cuts.

Queenslanders deserve honesty in economic management. They deserve a government that takes responsibility, not one that manufactures crises to justify austerity. This budget has exposed the LNP's economic contradictions. The Premier and Treasurer must now decide: will they deliver the services that Queenslanders rely on or will they continue down the path of cuts, chaos and broken promises? I support the appropriation for essential services but we in opposition will continue to hold this government to account for its actions.