



Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Record of Proceedings, 27 August 2025


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Education, Arts and Communities Committee

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algeester—ALP) (4.41 pm): Artistic expression is vital to a healthy democratic society. It is why there has been a long-held view that politicians should remain at arms-length from the processes surrounding artistic endeavours. What was revealed in estimates, however, is incredibly alarming. The Chief Executive Officer of the State Library confirmed to the committee that the arts minister had personally directed the Library board to rescind the 2025 black&write! writing fellowship which had been awarded following an independent process utilising well-regarded and trusted judges. The *Brisbane Times* reported this decision as an extraordinary overreach that undermines the independence of Queensland's arts sector. What was the minister's response? He would 'not rule out taking similar action in the future if it is deemed necessary'.

The *Courier-Mail* described the fallout as the largest mass resignation of literary judges ever seen in Queensland. Twelve judges—highly regarded and experienced judges—walked away in protest. They knew that their independence had been compromised. They knew that the integrity of Queensland's literary awards was under attack. What was the minister's response? He brushed it aside with chilling indifference, saying, 'If they choose not to be judges ... we will find other judges.' These words reveal the true mindset of this government.

It was also confirmed that it was the minister's decision to cut two long-planned-for First Nations cultural centres—projects in Cairns and Brisbane. The minister was unable to answer a very simple question regarding what consultation had occurred prior to his decision to cut these centres. Instead, he blamed everyone else, including those who had attempted to establish these cultural centres in the past.

When it came to naming the new QPAC theatre, it was revealed that the QPAC board, after careful consideration, recommended to government that it be named after Oodgeroo Noonuccal, one of Queensland's greatest poets and truth-tellers. The minister personally vetoed that decision and replaced it with a public competition that excluded any First Nations options for the public to vote on. QPAC's CEO stated—

... community members could nominate alternative names and that that is what occurred and that there were a number of First Nations names put forward as part of the public voting.

Okay, what were they? The minister agreed to release all data and submissions from the naming poll in question on notice No. 511. To ensure transparency, I call on the minister to publish that today.

When it comes to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, I have to say—and many others have agreed—that I have never seen such a poor performance from a cabinet minister in this place. The minister was unable to answer even the simplest of questions and in fact deliberately wasted the committee's time to, I can only assume, avoid scrutiny of her portfolio.

For the record, I absolutely believe that everybody deserves access to clean, safe drinking water, and I recognise the work of the state and federal governments to support water infrastructure in three discrete Indigenous communities in Queensland. It is why the previous Labor government invested over \$180 million for water infrastructure in remote Indigenous communities, including \$62 million announced just last year in partnership with the federal Labor government. My concern is that the minister was unable to speak to any other topic. She was unable to provide real-time data on the Closing the Gap targets, even though her charter letter is explicit about her responsibilities in this space. She made several attempts at answering a very simple question about whether she personally had undertaken cultural capability training since becoming minister. She told the committee that she had undertaken the training, even though there is no indication of it in her ministerial diary extract. I call on her today to provide details regarding the date and location of the formal training.

However, the two most concerning revelations were the treatment by the minister of the LNP's Closing the Gap Priorities Fund and the significant reduction in staff working in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships unit. It was revealed that the minister had spent \$37 million without any guidelines or criteria in place and that she recommended the projects to government for consideration based on the feedback she had received. This is a \$37 million spend based simply on private conversations and her personal preferences—no transparency, no accountability, a virtual slush fund. There have been millions of dollars already spent, and to date there are still no guidelines or criteria for how the remaining \$71 million will close the gap in Queensland.

To add insult to injury, the director-general advised the committee that, of the 412 FTEs reported in the budget against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships, only 198.76 FTEs were actually working in that area. The rest were FTEs in strategic policy and legislation which, it was noted, services the whole department. This is yet another example of covering up the real story by this hapless minister.

It was also revealed that seniors were worse off under this government, with both the Minister for Seniors and her director-general unable to advise the committee of any new cost-of-living relief for seniors living in Queensland. Censorship, lack of support for seniors, cover-ups and a slush fund—this is the hallmark of this LNP government.