




Speech By
Hon. Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 13 March 2025

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

 **Hon. RM BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training) (3.47 pm): I rise today to speak in relation to the Appropriation (Parliament) (Supplementary 2023-2024) Bill 2024 and the Appropriation (Supplementary 2023-2024) Bill 2024. These bills, which form an essential part of our annual financial process under the Financial Accountability Act 2009, are not merely routine instruments of fiscal administration. They also stand as a powerful statement about accountability and the stewardship of Queensland taxpayers' money.

On 10 December 2024, our Treasurer, who also serves as Minister for Energy and Minister for Home Ownership, introduced these bills into the Legislative Assembly. They were subsequently referred to the Governance, Energy and Finance Committee for joint consideration, with the committee reporting its recommendations to pass them on 7 February 2025. This careful legislative process underscores that the decisions made today are grounded in both procedural rigour and a commitment to ensuring every dollar is spent and properly accounted for.

The bills before us are designed to formally authorise the payment of unforeseen expenditure incurred during the 2023-24 financial year. In effect, they provide supplementary appropriations for a range of departments, as well as the operations of the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Services, yet behind these technical details lies a broader narrative—a narrative of fiscal mismanagement, reckless spending and a clear disregard for the hard-earned money of Queenslanders. It is now the third time that the former government has attempted to manage the budget for that financial year.

Traditionally, unforeseen expenditure is approved in a single, timely supplementary appropriation bill introduced in the following financial year. Instead, faced with crisis and chaos, the former Labor administration resorted to repeated measures that ultimately culminated in a record overspend, a catastrophic failure that will leave a lasting mark on Queensland's fiscal history.

Queenslanders will be well aware that the record overspend incurred by the previous government reached unprecedented levels. Their actions, characterised by uncontrolled unfunded promises and a clear indifference to the provision of essential services, have not only burdened our state's future but also eroded public trust. The inefficiencies of that period are evident in every facet of our current financial discussions, with the scars of mismanagement visible in underfunded programs and neglected community needs. The bills before us are not merely about authorising payments; they symbolise a full stop on nearly a decade of fiscal vandalism. They crystallise the consequences of decisions made without due care or responsibility.

Today we are not simply endorsing expenditures; we are holding a government to account for its missteps and for a mismanagement that has left Queensland grappling with challenges in health care, education, housing and public safety. Let me be very clear: the unforeseen expenditure authorised by

the former treasurer, now enshrined in these bills, was not the result of unforeseen emergencies alone but stemmed from a systemic failure to plan, control and exercise a responsible budget. Throughout that troubled financial year, decisions were made that pushed our state's fiscal limits to dangerous levels. While the precise figures of unforeseen expenditure have been cited elsewhere, what remains indisputable is the legacy of a government that lost control of the purse strings, leaving behind a trail of underfunded services and unmet promises.

It is not solely the magnitude of the spending that should alarm us but also the manner in which these decisions were reached. In the final months of the previous administration, critical infrastructure projects were launched on the back of grand promises that never materialised. The narrative from that period is replete with examples of projects whose costs ballooned unexpectedly, warnings from committees about potential rating downgrades and expert cautions that fiscal discipline was rapidly waning. They were not merely political jibes; they were clear indicators that Queensland's financial stability was at risk. The legislative process that has now led us to these bills is, in part, an endeavour to rectify that very situation.

There are tangible instances of failure that resonate with every Queenslander. In health care, for example, despite additional funds allocated to Queensland Health, issues such as ambulance ramping persist. In the realm of child safety, even significant financial inputs have not closed the funding gap that would have otherwise left vulnerable children exposed to risk. Similarly, promises made in housing have not translated into the delivery of new homes and community infrastructure. These examples, drawn from both the official bill and supplementary talking points, vividly illustrate the chasm between the promises made by the previous government and the reality experienced by Queenslanders. It is now incumbent upon us to contrast these missteps with the clear, steady vision of the Crisafulli LNP government—a government elected on a mandate to deliver a fresh start for Queenslanders.

Since coming to office, we have embarked on a path to repair the damage wrought by fiscal mismanagement. Our approach is threefold: to restore fiscal discipline; to target investments in areas that deliver tangible benefits; and to ensure every expenditure is both justified and in the best interests of Queenslanders. We have already taken decisive steps to identify and rectify the inefficiencies that characterised the previous decade. A comprehensive audit of the former government's spending has not only revealed the extent of waste but also pinpointed where funds were misallocated or lost amid bureaucratic red tape. By scrutinising every dollar, we have started to chart a course towards restoring fiscal responsibility. This painstaking process is essential for rebuilding the trust so recklessly squandered.

Our government is also acting decisively on major infrastructure projects that suffered from cost blowouts and overruns under Labor's stewardship. We have cancelled or paused projects that were not delivering value, thereby saving billions for the state's budget. For example speculative investments that offered little promise of a return have been halted and resources have been redirected towards projects that demonstrably yield economic and social benefits. This balancing of priorities stands as a testament to the fact that fiscal responsibility and effective governance are not mutually exclusive but are, in fact, mutually reinforcing.

In addition to these corrective measures, we have set in motion a series of initiatives to foster long-term accountability. Among these is the establishment of the Queensland Productivity Commission, a body dedicated to ensuring every future project undergoes rigorous cost-benefit analysis. By insisting on such scrutiny, we are ensuring future expenditure is aligned with the genuine needs of our community rather than the transient political ambitions of a mismanaged past. The legacy of the previous administration is one of cost blowouts, unfunded promises and service delivery failures. We have witnessed vital projects in transport, health, education and infrastructure being undermined by a lack of planning and utter disregard for financial prudence.

Even as we acknowledge these failures, we must also recognise that the current government is determined to forge a different path. Our actions are guided by transparency, accountability and, above all, a deep respect for the money that Queenslanders have worked so hard to earn. There is no doubt that the record overspend and fiscal mismanagement of the past will leave long-lasting scars, but let this moment also mark the beginning of a new chapter—a chapter in which Queensland's finances are managed with the care, discipline and integrity our constituents demand. The bills before us are not just financial instruments; they are a declaration that Queensland will no longer tolerate a legacy of debt, deficit and deceit. Every minister in this chamber can, and must, speak to the failures of the previous administration within their respective portfolios. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure the shortcomings of the past are not repeated.

Today we stand united, ready to embrace a future defined by responsible spending, targeted investment and an unwavering commitment to delivering respect for taxpayers' money. Let it be known that our fiscal policies are driven not by ideology but by the imperative to safeguard the prosperity and wellbeing of our state. We have learned from the past and are now taking every measure to ensure future budgets reflect not the chaos of missed opportunities but the promise of a brighter, more secure future. In doing so, we are not only rectifying past mistakes but also laying the groundwork for an economy that works for all, where every investment is a step towards a more prosperous Queensland.