




Speech By
Hon. Samuel O'Connor
MEMBER FOR BONNEY

Record of Proceedings, 27 June 2025

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. ST O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Youth) (12.04 pm): It is always a privilege to speak on behalf of everyone in my part of the Gold Coast. It is a great honour to reply to the first budget that we have delivered as Queensland's new government. The Gold Coast overwhelmingly backed the LNP, and that support was a big part of why the Crisafulli government was elected last October. Firstly, thank you to my community and to our city more broadly for helping deliver the change that Queensland needed to see.

We are backing the Gold Coast first and foremost through our delivery of the new Coomera Hospital because our community cannot wait any longer than the years they already have under Labor. We will deliver at least 600 beds for our region—that is 200 more beds than Labor's 400 which were nowhere near certain to be delivered any time soon. The hospital will include a day surgery, pharmacy, maternity services, operating theatres and an intensive care unit—all vital, but all left out by Labor.

Our new hospital will have a multistorey car park and, importantly, will be properly connected to the neighbouring Coomera station. All of this will help ease the intense pressure on the Gold Coast University Hospital, which is in my electorate of Bonney. GCUH has the busiest emergency department in the country and that is compounded by the fact that there is no hospital between Southport and Logan. That is not fair on patients and that is not fair on the frontline staff who do their best to care for them. I am proud to represent thousands of health and allied health workers, so it is time they have the facilities they need and deserve.

We are also investing in new health infrastructure at GCUH—\$22.4 million to expand backup power capacity to meet growing demand and ensure patients are not left vulnerable in an outage. The importance of that was shown earlier this year during Cyclone Alfred when we lost power for quite a bit longer than usual. We are investing a further \$8.9 million to relocate child youth mental health services to enable allied community health to expand.

This year's budget delivers long overdue outcomes for the main suburb in my electorate, Labrador, with projects I have been fighting for over many years finally funded. We are backing the Labrador Tigers AFL club with \$300,000 in funding for an undercover viewing area, and I thank the sports minister to my right for his support of that important project.

Mr Mander: You are welcome.

Mr O'CONNOR: That is a footy club that I am very proud to have spent a lot of time around especially because I worked there before I was elected. That is technically my last job before becoming an MP—bartender and courtesy bus driver—and it really gave me a strong connection to this great little footy community.

Mr Mander: Good preparation for you here in parliament.

Mr O'CONNOR: Yes. This upgrade for the Labrador Tigers is not just about delivering a better clubhouse; it is about people like Lofty who gives so much to the club at every opportunity he has. It is about Grant who leads the juniors and Blackie who leads the seniors, both doing an outstanding job creating a culture they should be very proud of. It is also about people like Shatts—Aaron Shattock—a beloved former player who, as a builder, was working on the change room upgrade before a tragic accident happened just before Christmas. The club rallied while he recovered, finishing the change rooms and juniors areas through working bees. This new covered area is the final piece of delivering this part of the facilities that this great local club deserves. Shatts is now walking again, and I send my very best wishes to him and his young family for the road ahead.

We are also supporting the health of men in our area with half a million dollars to be invested in building a new men's shed in Labrador. Thank you to the two blokes who have driven this project over many years—Len Thomson who is a tireless advocate for men's sheds and who has been the heart and soul of Labrador for many years since it was established, and Merv Holliday who has also worked tirelessly. Their efforts and the efforts of many others to raise money to make this new shed a reality are greatly appreciated. It will be an extraordinary legacy for them all. I also want to acknowledge President Gordon Cowser, Vice-President Paul Whitehead, Treasurer/Secretary Jeff Gabriel and everyone who helps run this special place. Thank you for what you do to make this so much more than a shed. It is a safe place for connection, support and wellbeing.

I turn to my portfolio areas, where we have been left a mess with a housing crisis at a scale our state has never seen before. We are delivering a response across our housing system to meet this challenge and turn things around. Over Labor's decade in power, the number of vulnerable Queenslanders on the social housing waitlist increased by 81 per cent—81 per cent higher than the waitlist under my colleague who was the former housing minister. People have been sleeping in tents, cars and motels for months—even years—at levels that our state has never seen.

Labor held endless reviews, summits and thought bubbles. They did everything except the one thing Queenslanders were asking for—deliver homes at the scale our state needed to see. Labor set up the Housing Investment Fund which, in around three years that it was running in their time in government, did not see tenants move into one newly built home—not one. They oversaw random, time limited and funding limited grant programs which saw completely inadequate construction numbers of social and community housing. In fact, over the last decade the social housing portfolio grew by just six per cent when our state's population grew at nearly three times that amount. That is not a pipeline—that is a dead end. The community housing sector, despite its potential, grew just three per cent over the decade, weighed down by regulation and a government ideologically opposed to empowering them because they wanted to do it all themselves. Labor talked about community housing a lot but they did not do what providers needed, leaving them unsupported and with a master agreement project that languished for around seven years but which we have finally implemented.

The former government had a decade to get housing right but they failed Queenslanders. Worst of all, they ignored frontline workers. People delivering homelessness outreach and emergency accommodation services were left scrambling under short-term funding cycles. They would have to wait for every budget to know if they still had a job the very next week—no certainty, no ongoing uplift, no plan to improve the system that they work in every day.

Let me tell members what the housing crisis looks like on the ground in the words of a Queensland woman who knows better than anyone. Last week I met Penelope from Micah Projects who invited me to spend a couple of hours listening to a group of mostly single mums living in the hotel and motel accommodation they are funded to provide. Here is what Penelope wrote—

Emergency accommodation is not care. It's crisis containment. We are locked in our rooms, too afraid to go out. There's no kitchen, no rest, no privacy, no peace. Cockroaches infest our food. The noise never stops. And there is no sense of home.

These are the words of a mum who shared her story on behalf of so many others. Men, women and young people were stuck in emergency hotel rooms for months—even years—waiting for a response that could truly make a difference. This is the human cost of the failure to fund services and build homes at the scale we needed to see. Penelope went on to say—

We don't want pity. We want partnership. We don't need handouts. We need homes.

Queenslanders deserve better, and that is exactly what we are delivering by changing how things are done across our entire housing system. Stories like Penelope's are why this budget increases investment in headleases across our state by more than doubling the funding to the program. It is a far more suitable temporary accommodation option, especially for families, and our investment will help secure more properties to house them.

While the former government left behind a legacy of delays and dysfunction, we are laying the foundations to change the story on housing across Queensland. We are not here to paper over the cracks. We are rebuilding the system from the ground up with the right funding, the right reforms and a relentless focus on outcomes. Our budget includes an increase of \$1.967 billion over four years to take our total social and community housing construction funding to over \$5.6 billion, with \$500 million per annum locked in beyond the forwards. That last part is the biggest change of all. For the first time in Queensland's history, social and community housing now has permanent baseline capital funding—not a one-off injection, not a promise based around election cycles, but locked in ongoing permanent funding of half a billion dollars a year as a baseline to build more social and community homes. This is not an aspiration or a vague commitment; it is a funded commitment. The Labor Party could only dream of supporting social and community housing in this way. They are the self-appointed champions of social housing but they are all talk. Our LNP government is proud to be the first to make this transformational change.

The Speaker has reviewed and approved my speech on the budget for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*.

The speech read as follows—

Our investment will support Queensland's Housing Investment Pipeline (QHIP) to deliver 53,500 social and community homes by 2044, including youth foyers, domestic violence shelters, and social homes in remote and discrete First Nations communities.

But building homes is only part of the solution.

We know homelessness isn't just about bricks and mortar. It's about support, stability, and connection.

That's why we've invested an additional \$794.7 million in service delivery, backing in the work of frontline housing and homelessness providers across the state.

This includes:

- \$380 million for crisis accommodation and homelessness services to help Queenslanders in urgent need.
- \$208.9 million over 4 years to extend the 20% uplift to Specialist Homelessness Services something Labor never locked in—another unfunded promise from those opposite.
- \$74 million to support the very pipeline Labor failed to fund because you can't deliver homes without the services behind them.

Right now, 218 Specialist Homelessness Services are working day and night across Queensland, reaching people in tents, in cars, in makeshift shelters and helping them into safe, stable housing.

We're backing their work with real funding and real respect.

We're also investing in the essential infrastructure that keeps communities going.

Our Budget also includes:

- \$63.3 million for social housing maintenance and smoke alarm upgrades
- \$3.1 million to upgrade the Gold Coast Convention and Entertainment Centre delivered through internal savings and smarter capital management.
- \$3.3 million for Targeted investments in regional areas such as Caloundra, Mackay and Maleny.
- \$59.5 million to support the operations of the Queensland Building and Construction Commission—to ensure standards are upheld and the industry has a regulator with the resources it needs.
- \$1.8 million for regulatory action and support across community housing, disability accommodation, and residential services—because protections matter, especially for vulnerable tenants.
- And \$3.1 million for peak housing and homelessness bodies—recognising that collaboration is key to reform.

We're also working with community housing providers to give them greater confidence to invest, expand and grow.

Because we know that government can't do it alone—it takes a whole sector approach to meet the scale of the challenge.

Before I close, I want to acknowledge the dedicated team behind the scenes—the people who work tirelessly to turn this vision into reality through our Budget.

Thank you to my Director-General Mark Cridland, Deputy Director-Generals Sarah Amos, Danielle McAllister, Matthew Nye, Graham Atkins, Andrew Bennett, and our CFO Tanya Brady and her team who put so much into this.

I particularly want to acknowledge members of Sarah's team including Sam Betros, Brooke Morrissy and Kelly Mangan who are responsible for growing social and community housing. I am excited to see what they can achieve with the record funding uplift and Queensland-first long-term certainty they now have.

Thank you to all our dedicated public servants across our entire department. I greatly appreciate the warm welcome you've given me over the last eight months I have been serving as your minister and I look forward to meeting more of you in my travels.

And to my own office team—particularly my Chief of Staff Matt Adams, Head of Media Caet Young and Head of Policy Christien Duffey—thank you for what you do every single day. You are making a difference and you should be proud of what we're achieving.

Mr Speaker, this is a government of action and accountability.

We've inherited a decade of Labor's mismanagement but we're not making excuses, we're delivering progress.

Our first Budget proves that.

It reflects the clear message Queenslanders sent at the last election—to clean up the mess, restore confidence, and deliver change.

We are unlocking land. We are accelerating construction. We are expanding emergency support. We are reducing red tape and improving how our building industry is regulated. We are removing the barriers that prevent people from accessing safe, affordable housing.

This is how we secure Queensland's housing future.

This Budget lays down the foundations for something far greater than numbers on a page.

To every Queenslander waiting for a home, waiting for support, waiting for change—we hear you and this Budget shows that we are acting for you in a big way.

Housing is a priority for this government and the comprehensive measure in this Budget proves it.

We've inherited an unprecedented crisis so we must deliver an unprecedented response.

Our first Budget shows we haven't missed the opportunity to change how things are done across the system to deliver the results Queenslanders are desperate to see.

The Crisafulli Government will deliver a place to call home for more Queenslanders.

I will end where I began by again thanking everyone in my part of the Gold Coast.

Our Gold Coast LNP team is proud to serve the communities we represent through the values we share of aspiration, freedom, reward for effort, the importance of the individual, and the spirit of entrepreneurship.

That's what our city is built on and we now have a state government with a foundation based on these principles.

We are proud to be delivering for the Gold Coast with record investments in overdue health facilities, game changing transport infrastructure, more housing, and many other projects to grow our economy and protect the lifestyle we all love.

I commend the Budget to the House.