



Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 26 August 2025

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; HEALTH,
ENVIRONMENT AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE, REPORT**

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (5.22 pm): In rising to speak on the 2025 Appropriation Bill, it is not on what we learnt or unearthed prior and during the hearings, it is regarding the process. Before I start I want to thank ministers Powell and Nicholls, as well as DGs and all departmental staff who worked extremely hard and, from my experience, answered questions with transparency and respect. I give thanks as well to the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, whom I found fair in rulings and time allocations, and the opposition, who let us get extra questions in.

Now I turn to the overall estimates process, a crucial one, providing Queenslanders, through their elected representatives, the ability to question what is being funded or not. Between my Health, Environment and Innovation Committee and as a guest of the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee there were roughly 24 hours over two days for questions. After time allowed for ministers' opening statements, this equated to four minutes an hour for the crossbench, about 90 minutes in that 24 hours, which was around 20 questions. Given the crossbench represents 26 per cent of the land mass of Queensland, this is insufficient, hence why the Katter members were not in attendance. To travel vast distances to get one, maybe two, questions in raises the real need for reform. As I said before, this is not a reflection on those involved in the hearings. Everyone endeavoured to work in a flawed system and we appreciated the extra time. However, we cannot rely on the generosity of the chair or the opposition in attendance as the basis for an effective scrutinising system and having, as I experienced, frank responses to my questions. This should not be based on generosity, it should be a standard.

Since 2019 opposition members—the current government now were in opposition then—including the crossbench have sought a review. We saw some positive progress with last year's estimates, with one question on notice for crossbenchers per minister and extended question time for the opposition via a reduction in time for government and Dorothy Dixers. This was a good start, I think roughly 70-30, which is more than the 60-40 that occurred this time. On 28 July 2024 the *Courier-Mail* reported that, 'The LNP has pledged to overhaul the estimates process if elected in October, including changing committee structures to ensure all were headed by an independent chair.' This was a monumental moment, one that the crossbench, and no doubt all Queenslanders, were excited about. Instead, with respect to the Premier and his response to my question this morning, we have moved a step backwards. Now we have no questions on notice except to our own committees and less time for opposition and crossbench questions, even though hearing times are longer. Committee chairs replaced with the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, which is not the independence sought, did not see a reduction in the number of points of order and points of order on points of order, which lead to even less time for questioning. Again, this is no reflection on the Speaker and Deputy Speaker but ultimately what we saw was a replication of the past, regardless of how it is presented.

With the government claiming the completion of the Coaldrake report recommendations, we are left wondering if anyone has actually grasped the central thrust of the report. The report found—

... widespread disaffection with the performance of governments and rising expectation that our politicians and their officials be more accountable and transparent in their dealings, and behave with integrity.

and—

In every case, whether the trivialising of parliamentary committees, lack of independence needed by integrity bodies or lack of clarity about decision making, this can be reversed by a commitment to openness, supported by accountability.

Every single one of us as representatives must fight for this. To do less means we are failing Queenslanders. At a minimum the improvements of last year must be reinstated—and I ask the Premier to please do this—and an independent review of the committee and budget estimates processes drawing on the experiences across Australia and globally to develop modern effective systems.

In closing, I again highlight the incredible amount of work by all, from the ministers through to their staff, Hansard, the Clerk and committee secretariats for what is always a gruelling two weeks. I make special mention of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker because fronting up every day would have been hard. Thank you to all who answered my questions openly as this is appreciated, even if the answer may not be what I had hoped for.