




Speech By
Hon. Amanda Stoker

MEMBER FOR OODGEROO

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (SUPPLEMENTARY 2024-2025) BILL;
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 **Hon. AJ STOKER** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (4.58 pm): It has been a long time since I have taken my kids to a circus, but it has not been long since this chamber saw a clown show. Those are not my words; it was the *Australian Financial Review* that described Labor's last budget as a clown show—because it was all showmanship and no substance; it was absurd and ridiculous; it was devoid of depth and responsibility.

Roll out the clowns. Out of the clown car tumbles the member for Woodridge, who as Treasurer thought he could hide how big his deficits were if he split them into three bills with three smaller deficits—a magic act that says 'nothing to see here'. Then out of the clown car rolls the member for Waterford whose time as the health minister saw announcement after announcement of hospital capital works projects without the dough to fund them—even as existing infrastructure crumbled for lack of maintenance, ramping rates exploded and elective surgery waitlists grew. This left a massive gap of over \$2 billion, yet they still have the nerve to come in here and lecture Queenslanders about compassion. I guess a clown show is meant to be a comedy act, but the health care of Queenslanders should never be treated like a joke.

We cannot forget the member for Aspley, who in transport oversaw budget blowout after budget blowout on their projects—with the perfect example being the Cross River Rail project. Queenslanders were told it would cost \$5.4 billion—already a huge sum—but then after they handed over the reins for this state to the CFMEU it pretty quickly blew out to over \$19 billion.

I wish it ended there, but like a good clown car it is remarkable how many shocking examples fit in that team: a gap in funding to fix Labor's DNA debacle; a gap in funding to compensate victims of crime, the number of which grew wildly under Labor's crime crisis, leaving a \$118 million gap; and a horrific \$461 million shortfall in funding for child safety. They not only left Queensland with more children in out-of-home care than all other states combined; they failed to fund the services and staff needed to ensure they are safe. There was also a hospital in Springfield with no money to open and deliver its services, and it cost an extra \$600 million over four years to fix that one. They left a \$120 million gap for unfunded housing and homelessness services, and a gap of \$62.5 million in unfunded but essential social housing maintenance. I could keep going on for hours. While Queensland Labor are no longer in government, the hangover from their time at the helm sadly continues to hurt the people of this state and their pockets deeply.

The fact is that this bill is a direct response to the farce that was Labor's 2024-25 budget—which was supposed to last a year but in fact only provided enough for Labor to get through the four months to the election. They were blowing cash big in that small window and leaving the cupboard bare for the remaining months of the year. Do not even get me started about the spending that should have been programmed over the four-year budget forward estimates; it simply was not there.

When it comes to Queensland Labor, never before has a Queensland government spent more, borrowed more or taxed more yet left Queensland with less to show for it. This is no joke. I sometimes think people do not realise the phenomenal scale of the waste. Labor raked in record revenues because of the hard work of Queenslanders in the mining industry. They were left with a surplus of \$12 billion in the 2022-23 year—this was huge; a record amount reaped from higher taxes on industry—yet, in their enthusiasm for spending and their belief that they could buy another election win, they managed to turn those rivers of gold into not just an empty wallet but an overspend. To top it all off, they left Queensland on track for a \$252 billion debt by the end of the forward estimates.

In a little over a year of work, the Treasurer has shaved that trajectory over the forward estimates down by \$47.1 billion, but that is still too much debt. It accumulated because of poor discipline and misplaced priorities over a decade. It is going to take a while to pay it off, but we are determined to do it while maintaining the services that Queenslanders—and, in particular, Redlanders—rely on.

The nuts and bolts of the bill are that when departments and government agencies do not run to budget and spend more than was set out in their budget, an appropriation is needed to cover the gap. Sometimes that happens for understandable reasons, like an unforeseen natural disaster. Sometimes it happens because funding for major projects that is expected to come from the federal government at one time gets rescheduled in the timeline for delivery and there needs to be an adjustment. The member for Ipswich would have us believe that is the real reason behind the bill we have today, but that is not the reason for this bill.

This bill is almost entirely about filling the funding black holes left by Labor—promises they made with no plans to fund them. If a promise cannot be delivered, no matter which way you look at it, it is as good as a lie. There is one measure that is funded in this bill though that is something of an exception; it is in a slightly different category. When Labor announced 50-cent fares ahead of the election, it all sounded good but they did not fund it past February 2025. They had no plan and no dollars, and that would have meant an end to this cost-of-living relief that is helping so many people, particularly given the problems with fuel supply and consequently the high prices we are all experiencing.

My hats off to the Treasurer and the Premier for being the first in the nation to get onto this issue, pushing the Prime Minister and the federal energy minister to take it seriously—even if Mr Bowen responded with mockery before jetting off to a climate change conference. Honestly, you could not make this stuff up; it is so out of touch, but I guess we know where his priorities lay.

Fuel security is so important to our national security and our economic resilience. This team understands that importance. It is why the Treasurer had the ACCC on the job of examining collusion pronto, and it is why this government was getting the projects that underpin local production—like the Taroom Trough—on their way long before events in Iran caused a pinch. It has the potential to be the first new major oil province in this nation since the 1970s. That is something to celebrate.

These 50-cent fares were due to end because Labor had not funded them. Our LNP-backed, permanent 50-cent fares are funded by this bill. It is like the other matters in the big old Labor black hole—because they were not funded—but it is different because we in the LNP have taken it, made it better and made it permanent and something that Redlanders can rely on. So much of what this government is doing to make a difference for the cost of living is not actually about spending more of your taxpayer dollars en masse. For example, making our community safer is not necessarily about throwing more cash at an issue; it is about ensuring what we have is directed to the right diversionary programs and having laws that align consequences to actions. When crime goes down, so do household insurance premiums.

The Energy Roadmap and the energy maintenance guarantee aim to save Queenslanders money by focusing on the right priorities. The result has been the first reduction in the wholesale power price for Redlanders and all in the south-east corner in a long time. It is down 10.1 per cent for households and nearly 13 per cent for small businesses. In contrast, prices went up 19.9 per cent in Labor's last year of government. Doing the basics right, calmly and carefully, goes an awfully long way. It is a whole lot more sustainable than the so-called relief that Labor claims to support—which is little more than taxing you more, putting a Labor brand on it and handing it back to you. I guess that is just old Labor habits dying hard. It is their old mantra: if it walks, tax it; if it talks, tax it; if it eats, tax it. This bill is a much needed reminder of how much Queensland has needed this fresh start.