




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (SUPPLEMENTARY 2024-2025) BILL; APPROPRIATION (SUPPLEMENTARY 2024-2025) BILL

 **Ms ASIF** (Sandgate—ALP) (12.21 pm): I rise to speak in the cognate debate of the appropriation supplementary bills. As a member of the Governance, Energy and Finance Committee, I also want to thank the secretariat for their work in providing support to the committee through this process. The opposition will not be opposing these bills as they fulfil a legislative requirement, but that does not mean that the LNP is off the hook when it comes to scrutiny and ensuring that there is transparency in how they are spending Queenslanders' taxpayer dollars.

When the Crisafulli government took office, they made several promises. Those promises included commitments to Queenslanders that they would be lowering energy bills, they would be helping families with the increasing cost of living and they would be helping household budgets decrease—promises we are yet to see delivered. The Treasurer also made quite a performance in his introduction speech attacking the former Labor government for introducing supplementary appropriation bills. What the Treasurer conveniently left out of his speech was how those appropriation bills actually delivered action for Queenslanders in helping their household budgets. They delivered tangible outcomes. They delivered relief for those who were doing it tough. One of those bills was to deliver universal \$1,000 electricity rebates for every Queensland household and \$300 rebates for small businesses in our communities. It was real tangible support that went directly into the pockets of working Queenslanders.

Where are we now? Affordability has gotten worse under the LNP. Electricity prices have increased by 43.2 per cent. Rents are up 4.9 per cent. Housing costs have risen 7.4 per cent. Insurance costs are up 4.4 per cent. No matter how we look at it, everyday Queenslanders are worse off under this LNP government. They are doing it tough—they are struggling to pay their rents, they are struggling to pay their bills, they are struggling to pay for groceries and put food on the table, and they are struggling with the affordability of fuel. We are not seeing a single action taken by this government. We are not seeing any support offered to those who are struggling out there.

I want to briefly address the nature of the unforeseen expenditure, because there has been deliberate confusion thrown around the chamber by those opposite. As Queensland Treasury made clear at the committee's public hearing, these amounts contribute to unforeseen expenditure but that does not mean that they were not budgeted for. Many of these items were included in budget estimates but were held centrally and not allocated to departments at the time of the original appropriation acts. Enterprise bargaining agreement outcomes are a prime example of this. They are budgeted by agencies but held centrally until new agreements commence. I know there are a few members on the government benches who do not understand the concept of this.

That brings me to the great consultation con. When the Treasurer promised to reduce government spending, he told Queenslanders that an over-reliance on external consultants and contractors was a key priority. The Treasurer was so confident that he promised to deliver \$6.8 billion

in savings over four years, introducing a \$3 billion cap for 2024-25. That was the centrepiece of their fiscal strategy. It was the only reason they could claim that their election costings were balanced. So what happened? They missed that cap by \$1 billion.

Mr Power: A billion!

Ms ASIF: That is right—\$1 billion. They are failing to deliver those savings. Clearly their savings plan is not going to solve their funding problem. It just means more cuts are on the horizon. They have already gutted Labor's progressive coal royalties, removing a key source of revenue which was going back into the pockets of Queenslanders through cost-of-living relief and through support for families. They did this just so they could please their multinational mining mates.

Hardworking Queenslanders are bearing the financial burden as the LNP cost-cutting measures come to light. Teachers' EBA negotiations are in arbitration—they cannot get a pay rise. Oh and they have also been caught out underpaying them. Over 10,000 teachers in our state were underpaid by this government. Radiation therapists, nuclear medicine scientists and vital health workers who provide cancer care treatment have been told that they will be paid what they are worth—which is, according to this government and this health minister, a 25 per cent pay cut. That is appalling. These health workers work incredibly hard to provide care for those who are doing it tough and in their most vulnerable times. They deserve to be paid appropriately.

Queensland Rail staffing hours are being cut for up to 700 workers across our network. If cutting people's hours of work is not a wage cut, if that is not a job cut, I am not sure what is. Tell that to those 700 Queensland Rail workers who are now saying to us that they will not be able to afford their household bills because this means tens of thousands of dollars out of their pockets, like at Deagon and Shorncliffe stations in my local community. Workers at these stations stand to lose tens of thousands of dollars in wages—700 workers. This is an absolute shame from this government. Those people rely on those shifts every day to pay the bills. Some of these workers are now saying that they might have to go and look for another job because they simply cannot work reduced hours and they will need another source of income. They are under enormous stress due to the decision—a decision which is obviously a cost-cutting exercise by the LNP government.

Let's talk about TMR. They have a hiring freeze. Jobs in the Queensland Fire Department are on the chopping block. Quite frankly, at this rate I am really struggling to find an industry in which they are actually supporting workers. The LNP promised that they would ease pressure on Queenslanders when it comes to the rising cost of living. Under this LNP government we are seeing rego costs increase by 24 per cent and electricity prices have increased by 43.2 per cent. There is no relief in sight for families because now coal royalties, which were used to fund those measures, are now being used to line the pockets of their multinational mining mates.

Under this Treasurer's watch, Queensland's credit rating has also been placed under a negative outlook. When Labor left government, the rating was confirmed at AA+ with a stable outlook. The consultant savings have not been delivered. They have blown it, and Queensland's financial standing is at risk.

The bill also seeks approval for additional and much needed funding for frontline housing and homelessness support services through social housing maintenance and the social housing capital program. I hope to see this funding actually delivered because the only action we have seen when it comes to this government and housing is a lack thereof. They have scrapped the 15 per cent affordable housing mandate from development applications in the state planning scheme which was legislated by the former government to help deliver affordable housing.

Mrs Frecklington: Honestly, I'm embarrassed for you.

Ms ASIF: I take that interjection. I would also be embarrassed if I were you in a government that is not taking action.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kempton): Member—

Ms ASIF: I was responding to an interjection.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sorry—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No. I have already beaten you to the punch. Could you use proper titles, please? What is your point of order?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It was what you just said.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask you to use proper titles.

Ms ASIF: I was taking the interjection from the Attorney-General.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I want your ruling on the reflection on your decision just then.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask you not to reflect on decisions of the chair. Could you proceed, please?

Ms ASIF: Under the LNP's watch the underfunding and under-resourcing of services is occurring. They have blocked affordable housing from being built, so forgive me for being a bit sceptical when it comes to trusting the LNP on delivering housing and jobs. I hope to see this funding delivered to help vulnerable Queenslanders in my community such as Suchika and her partner, a newly married couple who want to buy a home. She is a hardworking social worker who cannot afford a home in Queensland and there is nothing available for her. Bella wants to see action on rent increases, and James is appalled by this government's decision to build on flood plains and poor town planning. We need to take appropriate action to deliver housing for Queenslanders who are in need. The LNP pride themselves on their nation-leading policies, but the only things nation-leading now are the highest house prices and average rents and their inaction on tackling fuel affordability. That is certainly not something those opposite should be proud of.

I would like to see health funding resumed and the projects that are on the LNP government's chopping block delivered to provide the health services that Queenslanders need. The government may hope Queenslanders have forgotten about all of the hospital and health projects that have been either cut or paused, but they are out of luck on that because northsiders have not forgotten about the Redcliffe Hospital or the Prince Charles Hospital Expansion Project. They are still on pause. We hear crickets from the health minister about the work that is being done to deliver those, which were projects funded under a Labor government. While our community looks at an empty site, emergency departments overflow.

I was chatting to a doctor at Redcliffe Hospital recently who told me she is appalled by this government and their lack of concern for her patients. The doctor spoke about the pressure her staff are under every single day: the ramping, the bed shortages, the burnout. At Redcliffe Hospital Labor was expected to deliver 204 beds by 2027. Under this LNP government's hospital-cutting plan, those beds will not be delivered until 2032. I wonder if the member for Redcliffe is being honest about this news with the people she represents. We are told the government is also working out a master plan for the Prince Charles Hospital upgrade, whatever that means. I am not even sure we are going to see those beds delivered. Elective surgery waitlists have grown dramatically since the LNP came to government, so I sure hope to see funding delivered for that because people deserve to get the health care they need.

It is not just in health. We know that this government's cost-cutting crusade knows no bounds. The LNP like to say they are the party of responsible economic management, but it is economic management that lines the pockets of their multinational mates at the cost of working Queenslanders. Whether it is health workers, rail workers, teachers or energy workers, this government is waging war on the wages and conditions of working Queenslanders. They just do not want people to see it. I say to every worker across the state who is being impacted by this LNP's cost cutting: 'We see you. We hear you. We stand with you.' Labor will always stand for working Queenslanders. We will always fight for your wages. We will always fight for your working conditions. We are here with you and we will fight against this LNP's cuts every step of the way.