

Speech By

Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; GOVERNANCE, ENERGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE, REPORT

Dr ROWAN (Moggill—LNP) (12.15 pm): I rise to address the debate on report No. 27 of the Governance, Energy and Finance Committee titled *2026-27 Budget Estimates—Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2026*. I note that there was one recommendation of the committee: that the proposed expenditure as detailed in the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

At the outset I acknowledge not only the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and the Clerk of the Parliament for their significant contribution throughout the 2026 estimates hearings but also all of the employees of the parliamentary precinct and our electorate office staff, in particular mine in the electorate of Moggill and my staff member who works with me in my role as Leader of the House. I know that all staff across the precinct and electorate offices are tuned in to the estimates hearing and what comes through the allocation of funding each and every year. I also acknowledge the committee members, ministers, directors-general and public servants, together with committee secretariats and Parliamentary Service staff, whose professionalism and hard work ensured the smooth operation of the estimates hearings across the two weeks.

For the second year, Queenslanders have seen the significant reforms delivered by the Crisafulli Liberal National Party state government that have provided a stronger, fairer and more accountable estimates process. Central to those reforms has been the independent chairing of the estimates hearings by the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, which has brought consistency, impartiality and independence to proceedings conducted in accordance with the standing orders and established practices of the House. The Crisafulli Liberal National Party state government committed to strengthening parliamentary scrutiny and restoring confidence in the estimates process. For the second consecutive year those reforms have delivered genuine scrutiny, greater accountability and substantial opportunities for members to ask questions of not only ministers but also senior public servants.

Labor's statement of reservation seeks to tell a very different story, but the facts speak for themselves. Labor's complaints simply cannot be taken seriously. Last year those opposite falsely claimed that the reformed estimates process was broken and scrutiny had been diminished, yet the official analysis of the 2025 budget estimates process contained in report No. 40 of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly demonstrated precisely the opposite: of the 1,624 questions asked during the 2025 estimates hearing, 74 per cent were asked by non-government members compared with just 26 per cent from government members. I look forward to the report when it comes out this year in relation to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly.

Just like last year, once again those opposite are seeking to blame the process for their own failures within it. For the second year running, the Labor opposition came to the estimates hearings woefully underprepared. Shadow ministers repeatedly demonstrated an inability to ask questions within the standing orders and questions contained imputations, were argumentative, were irrelevant or

strayed beyond the responsibilities of the portfolio being examined. From my perspective, I would hate to raise a point of order at all throughout the estimates process, but I had to do that simply because questions that were asked by shadow ministers and other members did not comply with the process. It would be a much more enjoyable experience for me if I was able to sit there and not have to raise points of order. I had to do that because there is a process. There are standing orders and as a consequence of that we have to adhere to the process.

In some instances, shadow ministers appeared unfamiliar with basic portfolio responsibilities. When afforded the opportunity to rephrase a question, they lacked the agility to do so. We wanted them to rephrase some questions to be in compliance with the standing orders and the rules, which is what the House is supposed to be about. We hear a lot about the rules and processes of this place. People need to understand that they are there for a particular reason and we all have to adhere to those processes. However, shadow ministers and committee members could not do that. They were not able to rephrase or ask questions related to the portfolio area. There was a range of issues. That is not a failure of the estimates process; that is a failure of the Labor opposition. Therefore, a question being ruled out of order does not constitute a denial of scrutiny. Members are entitled to ask difficult questions and vigorously scrutinise ministers on government expenditure, and that is precisely what estimates hearings are for. However, members are not entitled to disregard the standing orders simply because complying with them is inconvenient.

Again, the process this year was a significant improvement. The government implemented the changes last year. We have enhanced those processes and we will continue to do so. We have a balanced approach when it comes to the estimates process. We provide opportunities to scrutinise ministers and the expenditure of money. What a fantastic time we all had.