




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 26 March 2026

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

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (4.26 pm): I rise to make a contribution in the cognate debate of the supplementary appropriation bills. It would be remiss of me not to initially commence with some of the deliberations and comments by the current Treasurer. I know the Treasurer is new to that particular role, but I was quite bewildered in terms of some of the comments he made towards Labor with regard to introducing supplementary appropriation bills. He should know by now that the purpose of the bills is to provide for unforeseen circumstances that apply as a result of following a budget bill. Those scurrilous attacks upon Labor were uncalled for, and I think he should think twice in the future about commenting on that aspect of appropriation bills.

As you and other members in this House would know, Deputy Speaker, one of those appropriation bills was to deliver universal \$1,000 electricity rebates for householders as well as \$300 rebates for small businesses. I recall in conversations at the time, whether it be in my coffee catch-ups, at the markets or even over the phone engaging with my constituents, the appreciation of those people. Whether they be constituents or small businesses, they were extremely appreciative of what the Labor government had done in terms of ensuring that, in difficult times, they were provided with those sorts of rebates. If you recall, they were done in conjunction with the federal Albanese government to assist not only households but also small businesses get through tough times.

On the subject of tough times, we know that during tough times, Queenslanders and Australians turn to their governments for help. It is only Labor governments that shoulder the burden when times are tough. You only need to look historically where that has occurred. I will start with the global financial crisis. I felt very privileged to be part of the then Labor Rudd government where we contributed funding to keep Australia out of recession. In fact, ours was the only country in the world during the GFC that was kept out of recession because of the good stewardship and foresight of a Labor government. One example was the \$42 billion National Building and Jobs Plan. Part of that plan was \$16.7 billion for the Building the Education Revolution.

I recall opening many of those school halls and science centres. It kept jobs in place. It benefited schools. I will never forget some of the comments from then Queensland senator Barnaby Joyce. He is now a One Nation member, and I am sure some of the people on that side will end up joining him because they will be threatened by that particular party's success. He spoke about shiny tin sheds. Notwithstanding that, in all of the electorates in Queensland one can see what Labor did in terms of establishing school halls, science centres and so on.

During COVID, when the Palaszczuk government was in power, we protected Queenslanders. We were the first government in this nation to identify that as being an issue. What did we do? We made sure we had the measures and the levers to protect Queenslanders. We also put in incentives. We put in appropriation bills to make sure we provided not only for small businesses but also for people across

the whole sector. I remember that QRIDA—one of the organisations I was responsible for at the time as the agriculture minister—provided up to \$2 billion worth of loans to small businesses to keep them afloat. Some of those businesses would have gone to the wall had it not been for the then Labor government's assistance at that time.

I have spoken about the \$1,000 energy rebate. These are good incentives that only Labor governments have provided. Now, as we know, affordability has become worse. I listened last week to the Steve Austin program on the ABC and the Treasurer was speaking about 'doing our bit'. He said, 'I've done our bit. I've made investments in cost-of-living relief.' Where? Where has that relief been provided? We had a motion in this House yesterday with regard to providing relief for fuel prices. Fuel prices are out of control. We have a Crisafulli crisis. We have a fuel crisis. The previous speaker, in his capacity as chair of the committee, referred to our objectives of trying to bring down fuel prices as a political stunt.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr J Kelly): Pause the clock. I will take some advice. Member, I remind you that there is a private member's bill before the House. I appreciate that you are referring to what I consider to be a procedural motion in relation to that bill yesterday. While you can talk to some of the general principles that relate to that bill, you need to be very clear about not anticipating debate by speaking directly to the bill.

Mr FURNER: Thank you for your guidance, Mr Deputy Speaker. Unsurprisingly, when it comes to the Liberals and the Nationals, very little relief is provided when it comes to fuel. I was in the Senate after the second reading of the national FuelWatch bill, which was defeated on the voices of the Nationals—

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Acting Leader of the House, what is your point of order?

Mr NICHOLLS: I know that these are appropriation bills and that wide latitude is given, but I would suggest that a history lesson of what occurred five years ago, or longer, in the Senate is not relevant to the bills in this instance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will take some advice on that, noting your great interest in history in your own contributions. Debate on appropriation bills is generally given a very broad scope. I will listen carefully. If I think we are getting too far away, I will bring him back. I have heard many speeches in relation to these appropriation bills and many have strayed much further than the member has now. I ask the member to be somewhat relevant to the current debate.

Mr FURNER: Thank you for your protection, Deputy Speaker. We are discussing appropriation bills, and hopefully there will be an opportunity in the not-too-distant future for this government to consider some assistance with regard to bringing down the cost of fuel. I was using that as a colloquial example of what the Liberals and the Nationals stand for when it comes to reducing fuel prices. Ironically, the Western Australian FuelWatch bill was introduced by the Liberals in 2001. It is an example of how forward thinking Liberal Party governments can be when considering what should be done to address fuel prices.

I turn now to the ABS consumer price index. We know that electricity prices have increased by 43.2 per cent, rents have increased by 4.9 per cent, housing costs have increased by 7.4 per cent and insurance costs have increased by 4.4 per cent. It is a typical example of where this government can do better with regard to cost-of-living relief for Queenslanders.

I want to use my last couple of minutes to talk about one component of the committee report and an appropriation in my previous department, which is now called the Department of Primary Industries. Just over \$81 million has been provided for primary industries. The report indicates that funding is for the fire ant suppression program. I note that during estimates last year the minister and the government never made any mention of the spread of fire ants. When we were in government, we used to have it controlled in the south-east. For the record, it is now the case that fire ants have spread to North Coal Mine in Moranbah; Plumtree North mine, north of Moranbah; Carborough mine near Coppabella; German Creek Coal Mine near Middlemount in Central Queensland; and an unidentified site north of Emerald. Closer to home, they have been seen in the Eumundi Conservation Park and the Bellthorpe National Park.

When we spoke about the program, we used to say how good it was at protecting Queensland and the nation from fire ants and that had we not taken action it would have spread as far as Bowen and Longreach. Now it has spread under this LNP government. Despite the fact that they have put \$81 million towards the national program, fire ants have spread beyond the boundaries of what we used to control. The member for Callide used to heckle me all the time about fire ants, but now we hear

nothing from him on the fire ant program—it is just crickets. They know that they have completely lost control of this program, despite the fact that they are putting in \$81 million of funding. It is astonishing that they crow about particular aspects of a program when they are in opposition, but when they are in government they are completely silent. It is amazing. The clown from Callide can say what he likes, but when it comes to—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Ferny Grove.

Mr FURNER: I withdraw.

Mr O'Connor: Fire ant's friend.

Mr FURNER: Thank you. There is a blast from the past. Once again, it is so important when we are introducing appropriation bills that they are appropriate for what Queenslanders need. They have to be appropriate in terms of cost-of-living relief and addressing expenditure, like the blown-out costs of fuel. We hear from this government that they are doing things. Writing letters is a good thing, but addressing the problem at its core is what they should be doing. There is one way for them to do that. As we heard from the member for Bundamba today and yesterday, they need to use the special powers they have to address those particular problems. They need to use the levers to bring down the price of petrol and make sure the supply is there to flow from the refineries into Queenslanders' tanks in these tough times.