




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (5.29 pm): I rise to speak to the Appropriation (Parliament) (Supplementary 2024-2025) Bill and the Appropriation (Supplementary 2024-2025) Bill. At the start I note that these bills fulfil the legislative requirement for parliamentary approval of all appropriations from the Consolidated Fund. The opposition supports their passage to ensure that expenditure already incurred is properly authorised; however, that support does not remove the responsibility of this parliament to scrutinise how and why this additional expenditure has occurred.

Under the Queensland Constitution, all payments from the Consolidated Fund must be authorised by an act of parliament. These bills seek approval for unforeseen expenditure incurred during the 2024-25 financial year totalling \$5.746 billion. This represents a significant increase compared to \$1.13 billion in 2023-24. According to the Report on State Finances, net debt has risen from \$5.7 billion in 2023-24 to \$16.7 billion in 2024-25—an increase of more than \$11 billion in a single year. This is substantial and warrants careful examination, particularly when considered alongside service delivery outcomes across the state.

While the Treasurer criticised previous governments for their use of supplementary appropriations, it is important to recognise that such mechanisms have been used to deliver cost-of-living relief, including electricity rebates for households and small business. Despite this, affordability pressures have intensified. Recent ABS data shows electricity prices increasing by 43.2 per cent, rents by 4.9 per cent, housing by 7.4 per cent and insurance by 4.4 per cent. These are real pressures affecting Queenslanders daily and they provide an important context for the scale of expenditure before the House.

For Queenslanders, the focus is not on how expenditure is classified but on the outcomes it delivers. Treasury advice makes clear that unforeseen expenditure is not necessarily unbudgeted—it can arise from centrally held funding, enterprise bargaining outcomes or new allocations during the financial year including election commitments. These bills authorise substantial additional spending, and it is appropriate that the parliament considers how this translates into outcomes. Queenslanders are entitled to understand what this investment is delivering in terms of service, access and performance. When people experience delay in accessing specialist care, pressure in emergency departments or overcrowding in custodial facilities, their assessment of government performance is shaped by lived experience. Outcomes matter. The figures before the House reflect real pressures across Queensland. I will focus on three areas: youth justice, health and broader service delivery pressures.

The Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support received an additional \$144 million. This is a significant allocation and warrants close consideration. Recent reforms have coincided with increased pressure on watch houses and detention facilities. Watch houses, not designed for extended detention, are holding more young people for longer periods, placing strain on police resources. At the Cleveland

Youth Detention Centre, operational constraints have required the use of 'night mode', involving extended confinement due to staffing shortages. These conditions highlight workforce and capacity challenges and underscore the importance of aligning legislative settings, staffing and infrastructure. The additional expenditure reflects the cost of managing these pressures. The key question is how resources can be used more effectively to reduce system strain, improve conditions and support rehabilitation while maintaining community safety.

Turning to Queensland Health, the sector accounts for \$2.02 billion of unforeseen expenditure—the largest component of these bills. Funding supports elective surgery, mental health services and hospital operations. While investment is necessary, outcomes must be assessed alongside inputs. Since 2024, outpatient waiting lists have grown and ambulance ramping remains a concern across major hospitals. For patients, this means longer waits and delayed treatment. For the system, it reflects ongoing challenges related to demand, workforce shortages and capacity in a growing state.

Beyond youth justice and health, these bills reflect broader pressures across government driven by population growth, workforce constraints and increasing demand. Departments responsible for housing, transport and community services are operating in environments where demand is outpacing capacity. In housing, pressure on emergency accommodation and social housing waitlists continues to affect vulnerable Queenslanders. In my electorate alone, many thousands of people remain on waiting lists, placing strain on frontline services and non-government providers.

In transport, population growth and infrastructure lag contribute to congestion and reliability challenges. Workforce shortages are also evident across sectors including health care, corrective services, child safety and emergency response. Additional funding is increasingly directed towards overtime and agency staffing to maintain services. While necessary in the short term, these measures are costly and highlight the need for long-term workforce planning and retention strategies.

There are also broader fiscal considerations. The government committed to funding election commitments through savings on consultants including a \$3 billion cap for 2024-25; however, this cap is expected to be exceeded by around \$1 billion. These savings were projected to deliver \$6.8 billion over four years and were central to claims that commitments were fully funded. Failure to achieve these savings raises questions about fiscal discipline and budget credibility. This is particularly relevant in the context of Queensland's credit rating, which has been placed on a negative outlook. This contrasts to September 2024, when the state held its AA+ rating with a stable outlook. S&P Global has indicated that achieving savings targets, including those related to consultants, will be critical to maintaining the rating. This is not an abstract issue. Changes to the credit outlook affect borrowing costs and long-term fiscal sustainability. Unforeseen expenditure can reflect genuine external pressures but it may also indicate areas where forecasting, system design or policy settings need adjustment. Parliament must examine not only why additional funding was required but also how the reliance on supplementary appropriations can be reduced in the future.

Sustainable service delivery depends not only on funding levels but also on effective planning, workforce stability and resilient systems. The purpose of highlighting these figures is not a question of the need for funding but to ensure investment delivers measurable improvements in access and performance. Similar considerations apply in other areas. The Queensland Police Service has received additional funding, and there are expectations regarding the timely delivery of equipment and resources to support officer safety. Ensuring funded initiatives are implemented effectively is essential.

The Governance, Energy and Finance Committee has recommended that the bills be passed and supporting them ensures expenditure is properly authorised; however, approval should be accompanied by ongoing scrutiny of how public funds are used, how systems are performing and where improvements are needed. These bills provide an opportunity not only to authorise expenditure but also to reflect on the pressures facing key services and the importance of aligning funding, policy and delivery. Queenslanders expect public services that are accessible, effective and sustainable, and it is the responsibility of this parliament to ensure public expenditure supports those outcomes.