




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (SUPPLEMENTARY 2024-2025) BILL;
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 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (8.12 pm): I rise to make my contribution to the Appropriation (Supplementary 2024-2025) Bill. Recently I was speaking to some parents in Toowoomba who are busy trying to balance work, the rising cost of living and family life. They are actually not reading budget papers and they are not tracking appropriation bills—strangely enough, for everybody here; they are simply asking some practical questions: will the hospital be there if my family needs it; will support services be there if I make the call; can I afford to get to work tomorrow? These are pretty simple questions and, because of Labor's decade of decline, too many Queenslanders know what happens when those answers are uncertain. This bill is about making sure those systems hold and hold strong right now—making sure they are there when people need them.

Today we learned that Labor have, in fact, learnt nothing. We saw their manifesto and nothing has changed for Labor. They are still looking at the same old bad policies they had that led us through a terrible decade of decline. Queenslanders can see the difference. When I speak to my people they can see the difference. They know that the Crisafulli government is listening, they know that the Crisafulli government is acting and they know that the Crisafulli government is delivering.

At its core, this bill comes down to three things: fixing what was not funded by Labor, stabilising essential services and restoring discipline to government spending. There are real known costs in health, housing and child safety that were, in fact, not properly funded. That is a real shame on the previous government—or at least it should be—because to not properly fund health, housing and child safety is a disgrace. Anybody who analyses the budget papers will see that that disgrace is Labor's. These costs did not disappear; they landed right here in this budget.

Because the Crisafulli government listens, acts and delivers, we are now looking to make some changes. Certainly in child safety, we find that hundreds of millions of dollars were required to simply keep the system functioning—hundreds of millions of dollars not provided by Labor. That risks fewer carers on the front line; it risks vulnerable children being left exposed. The reason this appropriation bill is required is to make sure those services can still be delivered for the community of Queensland and ensure carers remain in place, frontline workers are supported and vulnerable children are not left without care.

In housing, pressures continue to grow across the regions and the provincial centres like Toowoomba and certainly in the south-west. Funding was required for homeless services, social housing, maintenance and victim support—all of which were fundamentally important in this area and, again, all of which were left languishing under Labor, who have learnt nothing and have changed nothing. They are still thinking exactly the same. They left vulnerable, homeless people exposed through their lack of budget discipline and allocation.

In health, it does not get any better for Labor. We know that elective surgery backlogs, workforce shortages and infrastructure strain have placed real pressure on services that the people of Queensland expect to be delivered by their government. These were known pressures by the Labor government, but in a decade of decline they left them to grow. They left these problems to grow and these pressures to increase. Again, we find today that Labor have learnt nothing and they have changed nothing in their thinking.

The Crisafulli government is taking responsibility—funding properly, stabilising the system and delivering outcomes—because the Crisafulli government listens, acts and delivers. This bill fixes what was not funded, protects essential services and restores discipline. That is fundamentally important. Around \$5.7 billion in unforeseen expenditure is what we are looking at here. That is, in fact, down from \$9 billion in the previous year. We are funding child safety, we are supporting housing and addressing homelessness, we are stabilising the health system and we are delivering cost-of-living relief with 50-cent fares, which at the moment I know are pretty popular across the state.

It is not about announcements but delivery. In my electorate you can see the social housing being built. You can see the hospital being built. We know that child safety is being funded after it was left desperately short. People are starting to use the 50-cent fares. Toowoomba has always struggled a bit with public transport, but the council is to be commended for putting a charge in. I know that the state government will be working with them to make sure we have more 50-cent fares available across the region so that people can get that real cost-of-living saving by leaving the car at home and catching the bus.

The reason we know that is a good idea and the reason we wanted to permanently fund that—unlike the previous government, who made a lot of announcements but did not put the money in the budget; one of the reasons we are here is to make sure the money is there—is that the Crisafulli government listens, acts and delivers—unlike the Labor government, who we know have learnt nothing from their decade of decline. We know that they have changed nothing in their plans going forward.

This bill is about restoring trust—trust that commitments are funded and that services are being and will be delivered. Queenslanders voted for a change. They voted for honesty, they voted for discipline and they voted for delivery, and that is exactly what the Crisafulli government is doing.

In my part of the world we see delivery with funding for a new hospital with 538 overnight beds and 84 acute mental health beds. This will meet the clinical needs of our community going forward. We have received ambulance upgrades. As the town is growing and further suburbs are being built on the outskirts, ensuring we have an ambulance fleet that is modern, capable and has the appropriate numbers is important so that when Queenslanders, parents, mums and dads pick up the phone and make the call they know that the service they expect their government to provide will be delivered. When it gets delivered they know that they will be ramping for less time because we have a health minister who is addressing the ambulance ramping that we inherited from Labor who have learnt nothing and changed nothing about their approach.

In Toowoomba we have just upgraded our sporting facilities. Social infrastructure is important to the fabric of the community so that people can enjoy being part of our community. I would like to thank the minister for ensuring that we have a nice TifTuf surface now, which I know the Clydesdales and the South West Thunder have been enjoying playing on. The lighting upgrade has meant that we will, at twilight, be able to attract some more serious games. In the future I hope we can upgrade the lighting a little more so that we can hold full night fixtures with TV-standard lighting. The stadium can be a little pocket rocket over a period of time. If a government applies a sensible budget and does it appropriately and in a methodical way it can be a little pocket rocket stadium with investment over time.

We need an additional road to the north from Wilsonton to Highfields because a lot of commuters are trying to make it into town and the New England is overcrowded. We will investigate that. Again we will understand the costs and we will put together a sensible budget and we will address that bottleneck over a period of time. In Toowoomba, especially with the Olympics coming, an athletics track would be wonderful to have. By partnering with the university and getting the local council involved, and maybe even some federal money, we will be able to solve that.

This budget is about ensuring that we are dealing with the expectations that the Queensland community has. We are here to serve and represent them and we will deliver for them. That is exactly what the Crisafulli government does, because it listens, acts and delivers.