

Speech By

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

Mr CHIESA (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (12.14 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Appropriation (Supplementary 2024-2025) Bill and the Appropriation (Parliament) (Supplementary 2024-2025) Bill. Supplementary appropriation itself is not unusual; it is part of the proper machinery of government. Where expenditure from the Consolidated Fund exceeds the amount previously approved, parliament must formally authorise that expenditure under section 66 of the Constitution of Queensland 2001. That is exactly what these bills do. They are an important accountability measure and ensure the House properly authorises spending already incurred.

While the process is routine, the scale and pattern of this year's supplementary appropriation tell a much bigger story. These bills are the latest reminder that the former Labor government did not provide enough money in its final budget to meet the real cost of governing Queensland. The former Labor government left behind a budget that looked better on paper than it was in practice. It did not fully confront the true cost of service delivery, the real cost of infrastructure and the real funding pressures building across key portfolios. Put simply, it was a Labor government budget for an election.

In its 2024-25 budget Labor hid project blowouts and underfunded key frontline services. That is why this parliament is now being asked to authorise an additional $5.746 billion in unforeseen expenditure across 17 departments and the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service. Treasury's briefing to the committee made it clear that this represented 6.3 per cent of the original appropriation. That is not a small adjustment; it is a high clean-up bill.

Allow me to briefly summarise the bills before the House. These bills relate to unforeseen expenditure incurred in 2024-25 that was not allowed for in the former government's final budget. The departmental bill seeks approval for $5.741 billion, while the parliamentary bill seeks approval for a further $5.406 million, bringing the total to $5.746 billion.

Departments can incur unforeseen expenditure for legitimate reasons. It can arise from genuine emergencies, responses to natural disasters, changes in federal funding timing, changes in project delivery or technical adjustments such as depreciation and employee entitlement provisions. The explanatory notes and Treasury briefing make that clear. It is clear that the scale of this year's supplementary appropriation was not only driven by those normal and unavoidable factors; a significant driver was the funding black holes left behind by the former Labor government. This is evident from the major drivers of the 2024-25 unforeseen expenditure.

There was $135 million to deliver the LNP's permanent 50-cent fares, because Labor provided no funding for that policy to continue beyond February 2025. There was funding for Cross River Rail—a project Labor once said would cost $5.4 billion—which will now cost the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority $19 billion to complete with associated works. There was $118 million for financial assistance to victims. There was more than $2 billion for Queensland Health, including more than $800 million in capital funding for black holes and cost blowouts in hospital maintenance, refurbishments and

infrastructure projects. There was $461 million to fill Labor's child safety funding black hole. There was more than $200 million for housing, including $120 million for unfunded housing and homelessness services and $62.5 million for unfunded essential social housing maintenance.

The departmental allocations reinforce the point. Queensland Health required $2 billion. Treasury required $1.8 billion. Transport and Main Roads required $405 million. The Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers required $304 million. The Queensland Fire Department required $282 million. The Department of Housing and Public Works required $231 million. These are not marginal overruns; they are major funding gaps that had to be dealt with.

When we turn to Labor's record, the picture becomes even clearer. In 2023-24 the total unforeseen expenditure was $9.078 billion, or 11.56 per cent of the original appropriation. That was even worse. What is telling is that Labor did not deal with that blowout in one clean, transparent supplementary appropriation after the end of the financial year. Instead, it was spread across three separate appropriation measures. To me, it looked very much as though Labor hoped they could avoid facing the full scrutiny of their financial mismanagement by splitting it up.

Yes, this year's figure is lower than the previous year's, but let us not pretend that 6.3 per cent is good. It is still historically high and it is a result of Labor's mismanagement and deception. Their budget papers did not own up to the real pressures in the system. Since coming to government we have uncovered what was left behind—multibillion dollar project blowouts, underfunded frontline services and commitments made without money to properly deliver them. That includes the very matters Queenslanders care about most. Child safety was under pressure. Housing and homelessness services were underfunded. Health required a massive top-up.

Even external advisers were sounding the warning bells during the last few months of the Miles government. Standard & Poor's talked of Labor's 'waning fiscal discipline' and 'looser fiscal discipline' which was 'eroding' the buffer in Queensland's rating. That brings me to the contrast. The Crisafulli government's first budget laid the foundation for a fresh start for Queensland after a decade of decline under Labor. It has not pretended the mess does not exist. It has not hidden from the clean-up task. Instead, it has taken a calm and methodical approach to working through the fiscal problems left behind. The 2025-26 budget was framed by the government as restoring respect for Queenslanders' money, and that is something I know my community of Hinchinbrook values. That does not mean the job is done because it is not, but it does mean the repair work is underway.

Queenslanders voted for a fresh start, and that is exactly what the government is delivering: honesty about the state of the books, discipline in expenditure and a willingness to make the hard decisions Labor avoided. These bills are part of that process. They are not comfortable reading but they are necessary reading because they show exactly what was left behind and exactly why the clean-up has been required.

Finally, I note the committee process. These bills were examined by the Governance, Energy and Finance Committee. The committee received a written briefing from Queensland Treasury and an oral briefing from officers. The committee made one recommendation only—that the bills be passed. For that reason, I support the bills. I support them because parliament must properly authorise expenditure. I support them because Queenslanders deserve honesty about the true state of the finances. I support them because these bills, while technical in form, tell a very clear story: Labor did not budget honestly, Labor did not fund adequately and this government has had to step in and clean up the mess and restore respect for Queenslanders' money. I commend the bills to the House.