



QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT **COMMITTEES**

2025-26 Budget Estimates - Appropriation Bill 2025

Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee



Report No. 3

58th Parliament, August 2025

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Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee

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Deputy Chair Mrs Margie Nightingale MP, Member for Inala

Members Mr Adam Baillie MP, Member for Townsville
Mr Mark Boothman MP, Member for Theodore
Mr Michael Healy MP, Member for Cairns
Ms Joan Pease MP, Member for Lytton

The following members contributed to the committee's work as substitute members appointed under SO 202:

- Ms Nikki Boyd MP, Member for Pine Rivers
- Hon Mick De Brenni MP, Member for Springwood.

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All references and webpages are current at the time of publishing.

Acknowledgements

The committee acknowledges the assistance provided by:

- Hon. Steven Minnikin MP, Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business, and
- Hon. Ann Leahy MP, Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers.

The committee also acknowledge the assistance provided by departmental officers who contributed to the work of the committee during the estimates process.

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Chair's Foreword

This report presents a summary of the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee examination of the budget estimates for the 2025-26 financial year.

Consideration of the budget estimates allows for the public examination of the responsible Ministers and the chief executive officers of agencies within the committee's portfolio areas. This was undertaken through the questions on notice and public hearing process.

The committee has recommended that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2025 for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business, and the Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers, and their departmental officers, and the chief executives of relevant government corporations and statutory bodies for their co-operation in providing information to the committee throughout this process.

I would also like to thank the members of the committee for their hard work and valuable contribution to the estimates process, and other members whose participation in the hearing provided additional scrutiny of the estimates.

Finally, I thank the committee's secretariat and other Parliamentary Service staff for their assistance throughout the estimates process.



James Lister MP

Chair

Executive Summary

On 24 June 2025, the Honourable David Janetzki MP, Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Minister for Home Ownership introduced the Appropriation Bill 2025 (Bill) into the Legislative Assembly. The Bill was referred to the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee (committee) for consideration.

The estimates process is one of the key mechanisms to examine government expenditure, performance and effectiveness. By examining and reporting on the proposed expenditures contained in the Bill, the committee assists the Parliament in its scrutiny of the Government's proposed expenditure.

The Appropriation for 2025-26 is \$105,417,248,000.¹

The committee's examination of the Bill is in relation to the:

- Queensland Fire Department
- Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers
- Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business.²

The committee conducted public hearings and took evidence about the proposed expenditure from the:

- Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business, and
- Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers.

This report summarises the estimates referred to the committee and highlights some of the issues the committee examined, including information contained in the:

- budget papers
- answers to pre-hearing questions on notice
- evidence taken at the hearing.

The committee made one recommendation (see pages v and 3 of this report), that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Bill for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

¹ Appropriation Bill 2025, s 2.

² Standing Orders, sch 6; Appropriation Bill 2025, sch 1.

Recommendation

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2025 for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

1. Overview of the Budget Estimates Process

The Bill was introduced by the Honourable David Janetzki MP, Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Minister for Home Ownership, and was referred to the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee (the committee) by the Legislative Assembly on 27 June 2025.

The estimates process is one of the key mechanisms to examine government expenditure, performance and effectiveness. By examining and reporting on the proposed expenditures contained in the Appropriation Bill, the committee assists the Parliament in its scrutiny of the Government's proposed expenditure.

The Appropriation for 2025-26 is \$105,417,248,000.³

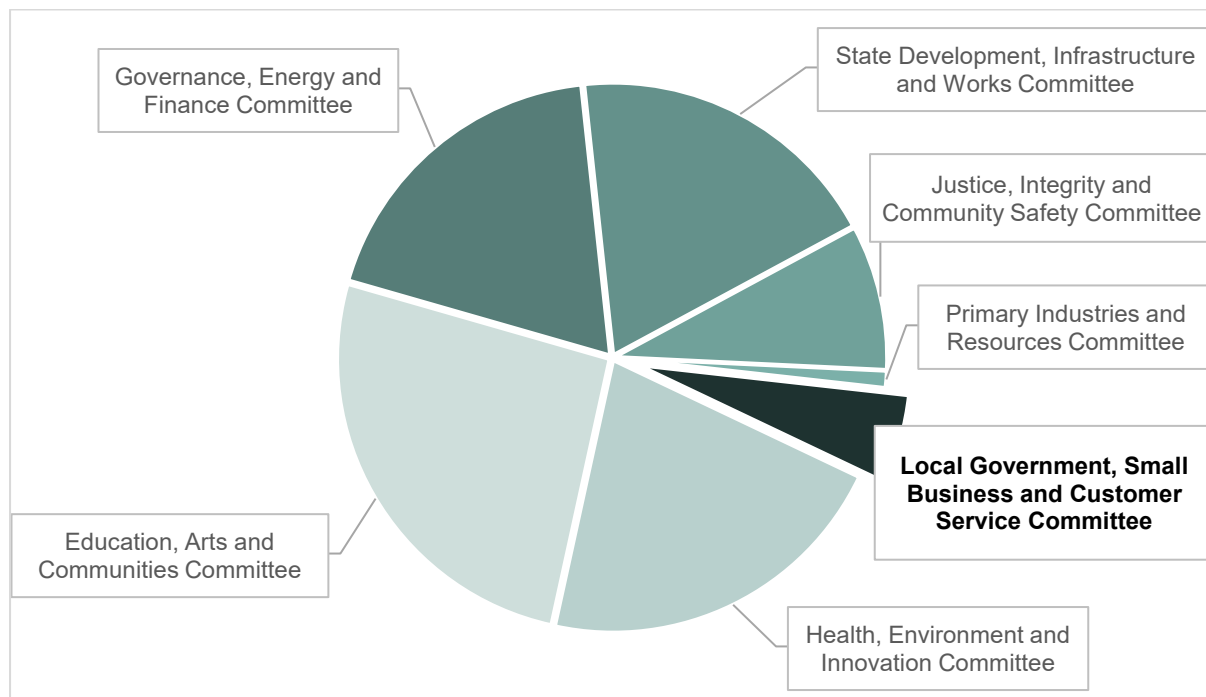
The table and figures below set out the appropriations examined by the committee.

Table 1: All appropriations examined by the committee in this report, 2025-26

Department or entity	Vote 2025-2026 (\$'000)
Queensland Fire Department	3,479,854
Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers	1,458,000
Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business	638,484
Total appropriation overseen by this committee	5,576,338

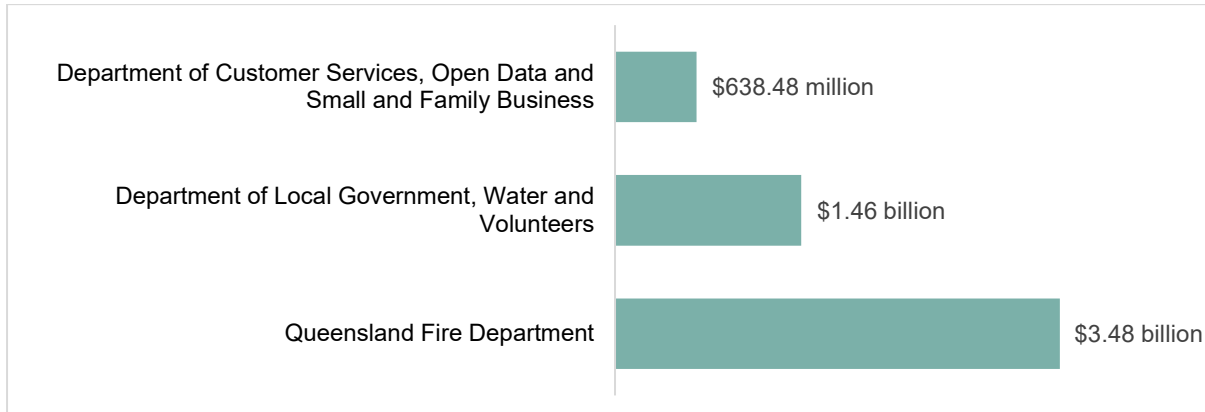
Source: Appropriation Bill 2025

Figure 1: Budget appropriations by committee, 2025-26



Source: Appropriation Bill 2025

³ Appropriation Bill 2025, p 4.

Figure 2: Departmental appropriations examined by this committee, 2025-26

Source: Appropriation Bill 2025

The committee's examination of the Appropriation Bill 2025 is in relation to the:

- Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business
- Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers, and
- Queensland Fire Department.⁴

1.1. Inquiry Process

On 8 August 2025, the committee conducted a public hearing and took evidence about the proposed expenditures from the Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers, and Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business and other witnesses.⁵

This report summarises the estimates referred to the committee and highlights some of the issues the committee examined. The committee considered information contained in:

- budget papers
- answers to pre-hearing questions on notice
- evidence taken at the hearing
- additional information given in relation to answers.

Prior to the public hearing, the committee provided the Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers, and Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business with questions on notice in relation to the estimates. Responses to all the questions were received.

Answers to the committee's pre-hearing questions on notice and the documents tabled during the hearing are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

⁴ Standing Orders, sch 6.

⁵ Queensland Parliament, Record of Proceedings, 8 August 2025.

1.2. Participation by other Members of Parliament

The following member of the crossbench gave notice of their proposed attendance at the hearing in accordance with the resolution of the House dated 27 June 2025:

- Mr Michael Berkman MP.

The committee gave leave for other (non-committee) Members of the Legislative Assembly to participate in the hearing.

The following non-committee Members participated in the public hearing sessions:

- Dr Christian Rowan MP
- Hon Mick De Brenni MP
- Nikki Boyd MP.

1.3. Should the Proposed Expenditure be agreed to?

In accordance with Standing Order 187(1), the committee is required to determine and report on whether the proposed expenditure referred to it is agreed to.

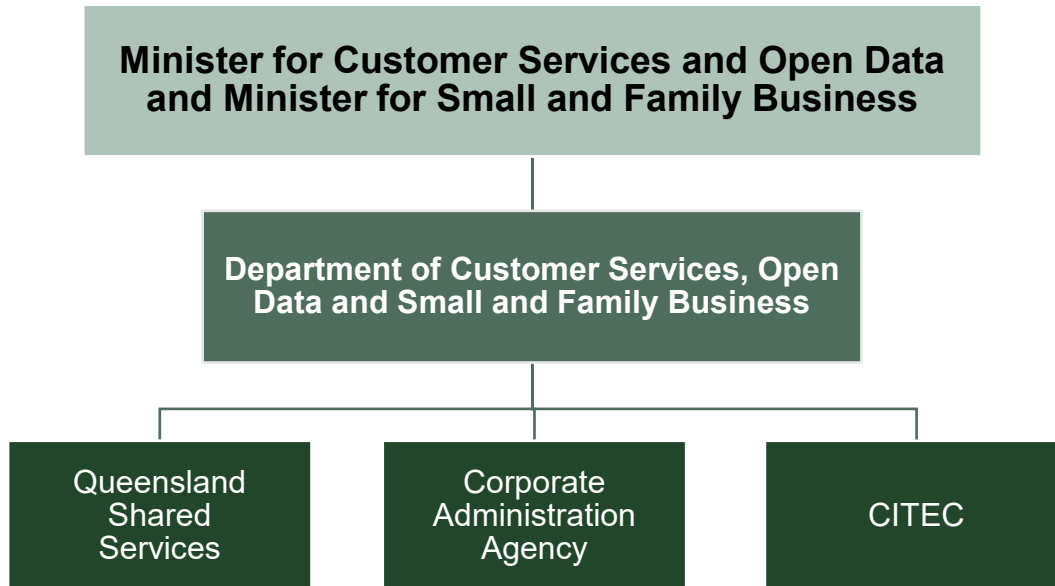


Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2025 for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

2. Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business

The Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business has responsibility for the following agencies, services and statutory entities:⁶



2.1. Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business

The Honourable Steven Minnikin MP, Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business is the Minister responsible for the Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business (the department).

The department has the following 3 service areas:

- Customer Services
- Data and Digital Government; and
- Small and Family Business.⁷

The objectives of each of these 3 services areas is to:

- benefit Queenslanders and their businesses by streamlining and transforming government service delivery for better customer experiences
- transform government services through cross agency leadership and secure operating environments; and
- create the right settings for small and family businesses to succeed.⁸

⁶ Queensland Budget 2025-26, Service Delivery Statements (SDS), Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business, p iii.

⁷ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business, pp 3-5.

⁸ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business, pp 3-5.

2.1.1. Budget Overview

The following table taken from the Appropriation Bill 2025 illustrates the proposed cash appropriations for the department for 2025-26, compared with its estimated actual expenditure in 2024-25.

Appropriations	Budget 2024-25 \$'000	Est. Actual 2024-25 \$'000	Vote 2025-26 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	-	145,136	636,854
equity adjustment	-	1,258	1,630
<i>Administered Items</i>	-	2,340	
Vote	-	148,734	638,484

Source: Appropriation Bill 2025, sch 2, p 9.

i. Trends in Appropriation

As a consequence of the machinery-of-government changes on 1 November 2024, the committee accepts that figures from previous budgets are not directly comparable with those of 2025-26.

2.1.2. Budget Highlights - Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business

The 2025-26 budget highlights for the of Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business include:⁹

to establish the Queensland Government Digital Fund. The Fund, which will be managed by the department, will drive a coordinated approach to strategic and targeted investment in digital and IT systems across the public sector	\$1 billion, held centrally, over 4 years
to boost productivity with a suite of initiatives including a Business Concierge for small business accessing government services, two new grant programs and regional innovation and start-up hubs. This funding also includes a refocus on the Small Business Commissioner on red tape reduction and dispute resolution, and to simplify small business procurement processes, standardise contracts and support smaller tenders, including delivering a 5-business day On Time, Every Time Payment Guarantee for small businesses and immediate payments for invoices under \$10,000	\$44.7 million over 5 years
for small businesses and local governments to implement measures to improve community safety and implement crime prevention measures in public commercial precincts and business strips	\$40 million over 3 years

⁹ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business, p 2.

to deliver a consolidated online services experience for Queenslanders	\$25.1 million in 2025–26
to support small and family businesses with the cost of apprentice wages	\$19 million over 4 years
for small business wellness coaches and financial counsellors and the Small Business Support Services Fund	\$16.8 million increased funding over 3 years

2.1.3. Matters raised during the Estimates Process

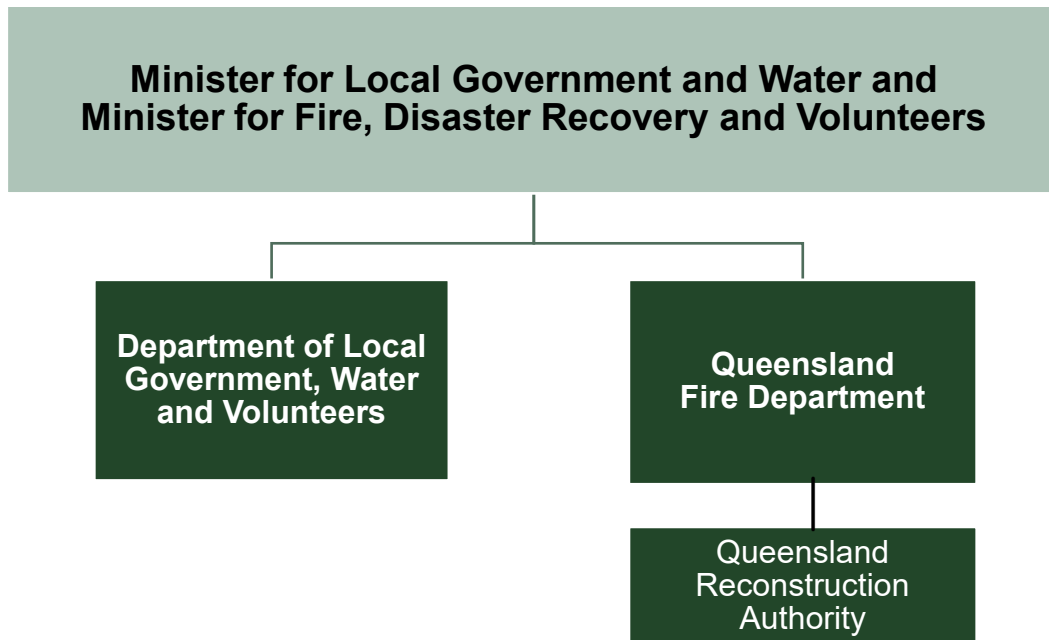
Matters raised during the committee's examination of the Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business, are below:

Matter Description	Pre-Hearing QoN	Transcript Page No.
investment in digital and ICT infrastructure - the Queensland Government Digital Fund	1	24-27, 32-33
customer experience for Queenslanders accessing government services	2	-
the Department's approach to Artificial Intelligence	3	-
the Small Business First agenda	4	13
initiatives to support small and family businesses	5	-
community safety and crime prevention measures for small and family business	6	21-22
growth projections for small businesses in Queensland	7	20-21
2025 Small Business Month	8	22-23
government support for small and family businesses impacted by recent natural disaster events	9	-
engagements with small business stakeholders and improvements of existing programs	10	-
number of contractors and consultants employed or engaged by the department	11	-
details of grants provided by the department	12	-
details of micro-credential courses	13	-
details of the review of the Queensland Procurement Policy	14	-
staff numbers in the Office of the Small Business Commissioner	15	-
Small Business Support Services Fund	16	-
Secure Communities Partnership Program	17	8-9, 33-34
number of Small Business Wellness Coaches and Small Business Financial (and Rural) Counsellors employed by the Department	18	-
details of Access to Government Services Online	19	-

Matter Description	Pre-Hearing QoN	Transcript Page No.
details of services that have ceased to be provided and where they are now provided from	20	-
energy bill relief for small businesses in the 2025-26 budget	-	3-6
Director-General's appointment	-	7
the cyber preparedness of small and family business	-	10
contract awarded to Cryptoloc Holdings	-	10-12
Small Business Commissioner	-	12-13
Membership of the Small Business Advisory Council	-	13-17
impact on regional small businesses from the cancellation of large-scale renewable energy projects	-	18-19
Small Business Support Network	-	19-20
Open Data Portal	-	26
late payment of invoices to small businesses	-	26-27
transition of customer service centres, contact centres, online services and digital identity services from the Department of Transport and Main Roads	-	28-29
establishment of a permanent Complaints Clearing House management office	-	29-30
upgrade of the shared services finance IT system from SAP to S/4HANA	-	30
administration of the Open Hospitals website	-	31-32
addressing the digital divide in Indigenous communities	-	33-34

3. Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers

The Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers has responsibility for the following agencies, services and statutory entities:¹⁰



To assist the committee with its consideration of portfolio estimates, and in keeping with the requirements of Schedule 7 of the Standing Orders¹¹, the following entities were present at the hearing on 8 August 2025:

- Energy and Water Ombudsman
- Queensland Bulk Water Supply Authority (Seqwater)
- Queensland Reconstruction Authority
- Sunwater Limited.

3.1. Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers

The Honourable Ann Leahy MP, Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers, is the Minister responsible for the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers (DLGWV).

¹⁰ Queensland Budget 2025-26, Service Delivery Statements (SDS), Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers, p iii, and Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Queensland Fire Department, p iii.

¹¹ Schedule 7 of the Standing Orders sets out a list of statutory entities to which direct questioning of chief executives at estimates applies.

DLGWV has the following 3 service areas:

- Water infrastructure and resource management services
- Local Government governance support and administration of funding programs; and
- Office of the Independent Assessor.¹²

The objectives of each of these 3 services areas is:

- To lead water resource management and infrastructure development to achieve sustainability, community benefit, economic development and public safety outcomes
- Stronger local governance in the local government system through capacity building and administration of funding programs; and
- Timely and efficient administration of the councillor complaints framework.¹³

3.1.1. Budget Overview

The following table taken from the Appropriation Bill 2025 illustrates the combined total of the cash appropriations for the department for 2025-26, compared with the budgeted and actual cash appropriations in 2024-25 for the former Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water.

Appropriations	Budget 2024-25 \$'000	Est. Actual 2024-25 \$'000	Vote 2025-26 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	322,062	538,343	670,988
equity adjustment	296,500	306,421	40,897
<i>Administered Items</i>	36,688	178,992	746,115
Vote	655,250	1,023,756	1,458,000

Source: Appropriation Bill 2025, sch 2, p 11.

i. Trends in Appropriation

As a consequence of the machinery-of-government changes on 1 November 2024, the committee accepts that figures from previous budgets are not directly comparable with those of 2025-26.

¹² Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers, pp 3-5.

¹³ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers, pp 3-5.

3.1.2. Budget Highlights - Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers

The 2025-26 budget highlights for the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers include: ¹⁴

address the department's structural funding shortfall. Former budgets left a large number of full-time positions without permanent funding. This funding will maintain continued service delivery and protect departmental jobs.	\$159.1 million over 5 years, and \$25 million per annum ongoing
provide a 15 per cent discount for eligible irrigators to help drive water affordability while we work to address the structural issues driving up water prices.	\$50.9 million over 2 years
upgrade critical water and sewerage infrastructure in remote First Nations communities across the Torres Strait to deliver health outcomes	\$41.2 million over 5 years, subject to agreement with the Australian Government
deliver water supply improvements and infrastructure upgrades for the communities of Aurukun, Kowanyama and Woorabinda, with funding for Woorabinda subject to agreement with the Australian Government	\$34 million
provide grants for playgrounds, toilet blocks and car parking facilities. This forms part of the government's total funding of \$62.7 million over 4 years for the Supporting Our Local Communities Program to support community-based initiatives where they are needed most.	\$9.3 million over 4 years
improve infrastructure for local communities across the state, including upgrades to town halls and playgrounds. This forms part of the government's total funding of \$36.3 million over 4 years for the Local Infrastructure Improvements Program.	\$5.7 million over 4 years
undertake a review of water sources for South East Queensland	\$4 million over 2 years
CCTV and security cameras in local communities. This forms part of the government's total funding of \$16.8 million over 4 years for the Resourcing our Police Program as part of the Government's Safety where you live objective for the community.	\$3 million over 4 years
to support the government's commitment to deliver a review of all 23 regional water plans in Queensland	\$1.5 million in 2025-26

i. Relevant Large Projects

DLGWV's capital program for 2025–26 includes \$407.1 million for capital grants. Major components of these capital grants include:

- \$166 million as part of the \$390 million to complete stage one of the Cairns Water Security project in partnership with the Australian Government

¹⁴ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers, p 2.

- \$48.4 million for the Works for Queensland program to support local governments in regional Queensland to deliver priority infrastructure, planning and capability projects that create jobs and support vibrant local communities, and
- \$45.3 million for the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program, which provides funding for priority infrastructure projects to meet identified community needs and support sustainable and liveable communities.¹⁵

3.2. Queensland Fire Department

The Honourable Ann Leahy MP, Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers, is the Minister responsible for the Queensland Fire Department (QFD).

QFD has the following service area:

- Fire Services.¹⁶

The objective of this service area is:

- To enhance community safety by minimising the impact of fire, emergency events and disasters on the people, property, environment and economy of Queensland.¹⁷

3.2.1. Budget Overview

The following table taken from the Appropriation Bill 2025 illustrates the combined total of the cash appropriations for the department for 2025-26, compared with the budgeted and actual cash appropriations in 2024-25 for the Queensland Fire Department.

Appropriations	Budget 2024-25 \$'000	Est. Actual 2024-25 \$'000	Vote 2025-26 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	250,068	283,328	243,675
equity adjustment	13,462	12,024	7,171
<i>Administered Items</i>	2,260,556	2,510,201	3,229,008
Vote	2,524,086	2,805,553	3,479,854

Source: Appropriation Bill 2025, sch 2, p 17.

i. Trends in Appropriation

As highlighted in the table above, the total combined 2025-26 appropriation of over \$3.479 billion represents a 37.86% increase on last year's budgeted appropriations.

¹⁵ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers, p 7.

¹⁶ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Queensland Fire Department, p 3.

¹⁷ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Queensland Fire Department, p 3.

A significant proportion of this increase is due to the Queensland Reconstruction Authority's budget for capital grants being increased by almost \$750 million from 2024-25 to 2025-26.¹⁸

3.2.2. Budget Highlights - Queensland Fire Department

The 2025-26 budget highlights for the Queensland Fire Department include:¹⁹

to support access for paid and volunteer firefighters to workers compensation following expansion of the Presumptive Legislation Workers' Compensation Scheme	\$15.7 million
provide contract support for aerial firefighting capability	\$2.7 million
acquire land to support delivery of a replacement permanent and auxiliary fire and rescue station in Kingaroy	\$2.5 million
acquire land to support delivery of a replacement permanent and auxiliary fire and rescue station in Ayr	\$2 million

i. Relevant Large Projects

QFD's capital program for 2025-26 includes \$134.1 million for capital grants.²⁰

For Queensland Fire and Rescue, major capital outlays include:

- \$25.7 million for replacement and new fire and rescue trucks
- \$8.2 million for operational equipment including specialised firefighting, scientific analysis and detection, breathing apparatus, and rescue equipment
- \$7.5 million for land acquisitions for replacement stations at Ayr, Highfields and Kingaroy, and other future strategic areas.²¹

For Rural Fire Service Queensland, major capital outlays include:

- \$23.7 million for replacement and new rural fire trucks
- \$5.6 million to complete the delivery of new or upgraded rural fire brigade stations across Queensland
- \$3.2 million to continue the delivery of the new Maryborough area brigade headquarters.²²

¹⁸ From \$1.889 billion in 2024-25 to \$2.639 billion in 2025-26. Queensland Budget 2024-25, SDS, Queensland Fire Department, p 15, and Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Queensland Fire Department, p 16.

¹⁹ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Queensland Fire Department, p 2.

²⁰ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Queensland Fire Department, p 5.

²¹ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Queensland Fire Department, p 5.

²² Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Queensland Fire Department, p 5.

3.3. Queensland Reconstruction Authority

QFD has the following Statutory Authority:

- Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA)²³

QRA's strategic objectives are:

- Rebuilding, recovering and reconnecting disaster affected communities
- Building capacity in recovery and resilience through expert leadership and partnerships
- Getting ready, reducing risk and building resilience.²⁴

3.3.1. Budget Highlights - Queensland Reconstruction Authority

The 2025-26 budget highlights for the Queensland Reconstruction Authority include:²⁵

towards the Queensland Betterment Fund, delivering high priority betterment infrastructure projects, including funding towards raising the Curzon Street Bridge in Rocklea and crucial flood mitigation measures in Laidley	\$40 million per year ongoing from 2025–26
Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) Efficiencies towards the Queensland Resilience and Risk Reduction Program (QRRRP), to support high priority disaster resilience and mitigation projects, strengthening Queensland communities' resilience to natural disasters	\$280 million over 4 years (\$330 million over 5 years)

i. Relevant Large Projects

QRA's capital program for 2025-26 includes \$2.639 billion for capital grants:

- to support the Queensland Government's program of infrastructure renewal and recovery within disaster-affected communities, and
- to help build disaster resilience across Queensland.²⁶

This Capital Grants program includes:

- \$2.487 billion for DRFA will be paid to councils, Queensland Government departments and agencies for reconstruction, betterment and other projects relating to natural disaster events between 2021 and 2025 as part of DRFA. This program is jointly funded by the Queensland Government and the Australian Government
- \$47.7 million as part of \$95.4 million towards infrastructure projects supporting crucial access links and upgrades to rural and remote access points. This program is jointly funded by the Queensland and Australian Governments from DRFA Efficiencies

²³ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Queensland Fire Department, p 13.

²⁴ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Queensland Fire Department, p 13.

²⁵ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Queensland Fire Department, p 13.

²⁶ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Queensland Fire Department, p 16.

- \$26 million as part of the Queensland Betterment Fund, delivering high priority betterment infrastructure projects. This forms part of the \$450 million Queensland Resilience and Risk Reduction Program, jointly funded by the Queensland and Australian Governments, including from DRFA Efficiencies.²⁷

3.3.2. Matters raised during the Estimates Process

Matters raised during the committee's examination of the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers and the Queensland Fire Department are below:

Matter Description	Pre-Hearing QoN	Transcript Page No.
funding of FTEs in the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers by the former government	1	-
comprehensive presumptive workers cover for frontline fire fighters	2	42
Queensland's River Improvement Trusts	3	-
Government support for Queensland's Agriculture Shows	4	64
Government support for Queensland's councils and the delivery of infrastructure and services	5	63-64
Government support for building more resilient communities through Betterment and similar programs	6	-
Government support for Queensland's primary producers	7	-
details of the Government's partnership with Queensland's councils to deliver for Queenslanders	8	-
delivery of generational water infrastructure	9	-
Paradise Dam	10	72, 75-76
details of the government's review of regional water plans	11	-
local government funding programs and grants administered by the Local Government Division	12	-
Safe Drinking Water Project (SDWP) assessments completed for Indigenous Councils	13	-
bulk water capital program	14	-
Water Security Plan	15	-
details of the Queensland Volunteering Strategy Action Plan 2024-2026	16	-
Queensland Fire Department staffing details	17	45, 76
Queensland Fire Department's forward capital works plan	18	-
appliance replacement forward schedules for Queensland Fire and Rescue and Rural Fire Service Queensland	19	46, 76

²⁷ Queensland Budget 2025-26, SDS, Queensland Fire Department, p 16.

Matter Description	Pre-Hearing QoN	Transcript Page No.
details of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority's communications, community education awareness campaigns and outreach activities	20	-
incident at the Callide Power Station on 4 April 2025	-	38, 44
future Fire and Rescue station in Bundaberg	-	38
Greater Springfield Fire and Rescue Station	-	38
plaque at the Drayton Fire and Rescue Station	-	38-39
increases to the Emergency Management Levy	-	41-42
fire and rescue services in the Moggill electorate	-	42-43
recognising the efforts of volunteers	-	43-44
independent review of the complaints management system	-	44
number of medium attack appliances in the Rural Fire Service Queensland fleet	-	45
retrofitting of deluge systems to the Rural Fire Service Queensland's existing fleet	-	45, 76
reimbursements to persons involved in assisting with fires at Torrens Creek and Pentland	-	46
State Recovery Coordinators	-	47-49, 57
inquiry into volunteering in Queensland	-	50-51
delivery of disaster recovery support	-	51-55
Emergency Volunteers Advisory Forum	-	55-57
Troy Thompson	-	58-60, 62, 66
representations about a proposed visitor levy	-	61-62, 67
impact of depreciation on local governments	-	62-63
Works for Queensland program	-	63-64
Red Tape Reduction Task Force	-	65-67
appointment to the Gladstone Area Water Board	-	68-69
Emu Swamp Dam	-	69-70
dam safety upgrades	-	70-72
water security issues	-	72, 74-75
funding commitments for water supply projects	-	73, 75
irrigation discount eligibility	-	73-74

Statement of Reservation



Statement of Reservation

Local Government, Small
Business and Customer
Service Committee

Appropriation Bill 2025





Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands, seas, skies and waterways from across Queensland.

We pay our respect to the Elders, past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This artwork by The Hon LEEANNE ENOCH MP is called "The Power of Many" from her "Connections" series. It represents the paths we take to reach our goals and the many important and often powerful connections we make with each other along the way.

Queensland Labor Opposition

The Queensland Labor Opposition thanks public sector employees right across Queensland for the work that they do each and every day on behalf of all Queenslanders. Without over 270,000 full-time equivalent public sector roles in Queensland undertaking that work, Queenslanders would not have access to the services and support that they need and deserve.

In particular, the Queensland Labor Opposition thanks all public servants involved in the preparation of Budget Estimates. Preparing for a Budget Estimates process is a monumental task that can involve hundreds of staff to not only attend the public hearings but also prepare briefing materials and gather information.

SMALL BUSINESS AND FAMILY BUSINESS

NO ENERGY BILL RELIEF FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

The Queensland Labor Opposition is extremely concerned by the inability and unwillingness of the Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business, to directly answer questions relating to energy bill relief.

In the 2024-25 Queensland Budget delivered by the former Labor Government, 205,000 Queensland small businesses were eligible to receive a \$650 energy bill rebate, jointly funded by the former Miles Labor Government and the Albanese Labor Government.

During the portfolio examination of Small and Family Business, the Queensland Labor Opposition tabled a copy of the 2024-25 Queensland Budget Cost of Living Action Statement, which outlined this information.

Shadow Minister for Small Business and Shadow Minister for Customer Service and Open Data asked the Director-General the total expenditure for 2025-26 for the provision of energy bill rebates for Queensland small businesses.

After LNP Government Members attempted to provide cover for the Minister, and the question was subsequently allowed, the Director-General was unable to confirm any expenditure for energy bill relief.

Indeed, this accords with the examination of Budget Papers completed by the Queensland Labor Opposition, with no energy bill relief for small businesses. This is despite the Crisafulli LNP Government's own *Small Business First Action Statement* (the Action Statement) outlining the following:

Key challenges facing the sector include:

- *rising operating costs, particularly for insurance and energy, as well as those driven by supply chain issues, including as a result of severe weather events and geopolitical tensions and uncertainty.*

Given the Minister's own Action Statement outlines energy as one of the key and rising operating costs under the Crisafulli LNP Government, it is extremely concerning for small businesses across our state that they are not being provided support for these costs.

The Minister was also unable to answer whether he requested any advice from his department regarding the continuation of small businesses in the Budget, nor if he considered the impact on small businesses given the increasing costs amongst the removal of energy bill rebates.

SECURE COMMUNITIES' PARTNERSHIP GRANT FAILURES

The Crisafulli LNP Government's Secure Communities' Partnership Grants was announced by the then Leader of the Opposition now Premier, and the Member for Buderim (the then-Shadow Minister for Small and Family Business) and the LNP Candidate for Bundaberg on 1 October 2024, at the beginning of the 2024 State General Election Campaign.

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The announcement was made alongside the owner of Network Car and Truck Rentals in Bundaberg.

This business was used for a photo-op by the LNP to sell their signature small business policy. The owner of Network Car and Truck Rentals in Bundaberg has expressed his concern to the Queensland Labor Opposition that it was not made clear to him he could not apply directly for the grant, and in-fact that he may be ineligible completely under the guidelines of the program.

He told the Shadow Minister that “*David*” (the now Premier) never told him he would not be eligible.

The Queensland Labor Opposition is deeply concerned at the misleading and frankly inappropriate way the LNP conducted the announcement of this program, not explicitly explaining to this specific business how this would be applied, nor subsequently reaching out to this business to offer an apology or further assistance.

Queensland businesses like this deserve better from an LNP Government that made many promises that are consistently not being followed.

QUEENSLAND SMALL BUSINESS MINISTERIAL REFERENCE GROUP

During the estimates hearing, the Queensland Labor Opposition revealed that the Minister has appointed a completely new advisory body relating to small business matters, despite the former Labor Government only appointing new members in September 2024.

The first concerning matter regarding this new body, is the appointment of Mr Philip di Bella, who has made substantial donations to the Liberal National Party. While the Minister may claim he was not aware of these donations, it is his responsibility to ensure all appointments are above reproach, as outlined in the Ministers Charter Letter, signed by the Premier:

“It is critical to remember that every decision a minister makes, and all actions taken, must be in the interest of the Queensland public. It is imperative that those decisions and actions should be made without regard to personal, political or other immaterial considerations.”

Mr Di Bella is also a well-known advocate for the removal of penalty rates, and his appointment to the Minister’s handpicked-advisory body will be very concerning for the workers and employees across the small business industry who are relied on to operate these small businesses, and who rely on penalty rates.

In addition to this, it was revealed during the estimates hearing that the Minister’s new handpicked Small Business Ministerial Reference Group fails to properly represent regional small businesses. The table below indicates the membership of the former Labor Government’s Small Business Advisory Council:

NAME	REGION	APPOINTMENT START DATE	APPOINTMENT END DATE
Alison Shaw	Tambo	20 September 2024	19 September 2026
Craig Bailis	Toowoomba	20 September 2024	19 September 2026
Mark Evans	Brisbane	20 September 2024	19 September 2026
Tanya Goodwin	Cairns	20 September 2024	19 September 2026
Andrea McCarthy	Mackay	20 September 2024	19 September 2026
Phi Hung Nguyen	Brisbane	20 September 2024	19 September 2026
Reuben Richardson	Townsville	20 September 2024	19 September 2026
Kay Tommerup	Scenic Rim	20 September 2024	19 September 2026
Jacqueline Trace	Toowoomba	20 September 2024	19 September 2026
Tanya Tuttle	Babinda	20 September 2024	19 September 2026
Terry Slaughter	Ipswich/Springfield	20 September 2024	19 September 2026
CEO – Queensland Indigenous Business Network		20 September 2024	19 September 2026
Queensland Small Business Commissioner		20 September 2024	19 September 2026

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Unfortunately, as was canvassed in the estimates hearing, the Minister's new handpicked Small Business Ministerial Reference Group removes representatives from Tambo, Cairns, Mackay, Townsville, Scenic Rim and Babinda.

The members of the former body were advised their appointments were terminated on 9 July 2025. While the Director-General confirmed that his department provided advice and suggestions to the Minister for expertise across a range of sectors, they provided no details on whether advice was provided on appropriate regional representation.

During the estimates hearing, the Minister said:

***Mr MINNIKIN:** ...I wanted to make sure that this ministerial advisory group was not top-heavy or maybe just in South-East Queensland—with maybe two or three categories of reps in respect of where they have come from. For me to get real value, I needed to make sure that the people on this ministerial representative group were a good cross-section of the small and family business segment across the state.¹*

In the Minister's haste to abandon the former body, and reconstitute it with his own appointments, he has failed to properly consider fulsome regional representation.

The Queensland Labor Opposition accepts that the Minister has said he will be making announcements in relation to further appointments, and we hope the Minister will take our concerns into consideration and ensure his next appointments include representatives for communities like Townsville, Scenic Rim, Cairns and Mackay.

It is incumbent on the Crisafulli LNP Government to ensure the views of regional Queensland are heard on all bodies. That is why it was also concerning to hear the Chair and Member for Southern Downs say during the Hearing:

***Mr LISTER:** I take it there is an inference that this board has to have a regional composition. Is this relevant to the purpose of that board?²*

If it the Member for Southern Downs' contention that the Crisafulli LNP Government does not require regional representation, regional small businesses including those in the Member's electorate would be calling into question how seriously he and the Crisafulli LNP Government take their concerns.

The Queensland Labor Opposition is also immediately seeking clarification from the Minister on whether both the Small Business Commissioner and the Chief Executive Officer of the Queensland Indigenous Business Network remain ex-officio members of the body.

The failure to include these two important industry leaders would mean the Small Business Ministerial Reference Group will not have sufficient industry knowledge and expertise to properly inform the Minister in the conduct of his duties on behalf of small businesses in Queensland.

REGIONAL PROJECT CANCELLATIONS IMPACTS ON SMALL BUSINESSES

It is clear to the Queensland Labor Opposition that the Minister is not making the appropriate representations to his colleagues regarding the impact on small and family businesses in regional Queensland following the Crisafulli LNP Government's decisions to cancel large-scale projects, and the delaying of regional health and hospital service projects.

¹ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing.%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, Page 14

² <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing.%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, Page 17

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A report from the Clean Energy Council, tabled during the estimates hearing, reads:

“Local businesses across the supply chain from building supplies, transport and manufacturing to cleaning and catering service providers can benefit from clean energy projects. Hospitality and accommodation providers will see increased traffic as workers spend earnings in local cafes and pubs.”³

The Minister refused to answer the Queensland Labor Opposition’s questions regarding advice provided to other departments and Ministers. While the Crisafulli LNP Government continues on an ideological spree against renewable energy projects and are taking a haphazardly political approach to health projects, they fail to properly consider how their decisions impact the communities where these projects would have created additional jobs, fed into the local economy, and supported the small businesses that are the backbone of our state’s economy.

INCREASED WORKLOAD FOR THE OFFICE OF THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSIONER

The Queensland Labor Opposition is concerned that the Office of the Small Business Commissioner has not been appropriately resourced to properly discharge its’ duties, particularly given the increased workload the Minister has tasked the Office of the Small Business Commissioner with.

The Service Delivery Statement also outlines this “*refocussing*”, and a large amount of other work the Office of the Small Business Commissioner has been tasked with. However, the budget appeared to fail to deliver any increased resourcing or staffing (FTEs) for this work to be properly carried out.

CUSTOMER SERVICES AND OPEN DATA

DIGITAL FUND

The Crisafulli LNP Government’s Digital Fund is a bold agenda, and despite questions during the estimates hearing, it is unclear how the government intends to deliver the project in full. The Director-General confirmed during the estimates hearing the “*intention*” is for the Fund to be fully implemented over the Forward Estimates:

Mr Lamont: *The intention is that the QGDF will be fully expended over the forwards. In terms of specific projects, as I referred to in my previous answers, some of them have different timelines, but the intention is that QGDF will be fully expended over the forwards.*⁴

The Director-General confirmed there are currently 10 FTE in the department working to review proposals taken to the Cabinet Budget Review Committee for the implementation. He also confirmed the Crisafulli LNP Government has already engaged one contractor related to the financial aspects at a value of \$824,725 for a period of 12 months.

It will be incumbent on the Minister and the Crisafulli LNP Government to ensure that the entirety of the fund is not spent engaging expensive consultants, particularly given the Treasurer’s commitment in the Budget to set-up *Queensland Government Consulting Services*.

The Queensland Labor Opposition will continue to monitor the government’s implementation of this broad task, ensuring it has value-for-money for Queenslanders, encourages the use of small local IT businesses, and does not jeopardise the safety and security of Queenslanders’ data.

³ <https://cleanenergycouncil.org.au/for-consumers/fact-sheets/recycling-get-the-facts/recycling-wind-turbines-solar-panels-batteries/local-benefits-of-renewable-energy-projects>

⁴ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, Page 25

ON-TIME PAYMENT “GUARANTEE”

During the estimates hearing, the Minister tried to argue with the assistance of government members including the Leader of House, that the provision of on-time payments fell specifically within the small business portfolio and not the portfolio of which the question was asked.

It is clear to the Queensland Labor Opposition that as the data is collected on the Open Data website and is the provision of a service or payment by the government to a business, it falls well within the Customer Services and Open Data portfolio.

The Minister’s attempts to avoid answering questions would be disappointing for those small and family businesses and brings into question the Crisafulli LNP Government’s genuine commitment to delivering on-time payments.

It was revealed during the estimates hearing that already between Quarters 3 and 4 of the 2024-25 financial year, the first two quarters of the Crisafulli LNP Government, eleven government departments and agencies had an increase in the number of invoices paid late to small businesses.

These departments or agencies were:

- Department of Premier and Cabinet – 116 invoices paid late in Q4 (up from 57 in Q3) to small businesses at a value of \$350,669;
- Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Rural and Regional Development – 28 invoices paid late in Q4 (up from 10 in Q3) at a value of \$326,759;
- Queensland Health – 5426 invoices paid late in Q4 (up from 5343 in Q3) at a value of \$21,011,956;
- Department of Education – 3365 invoices paid late in Q4 (up from 3281 in Q3) at a value of \$15,469,891;
- Queensland Police Service – 426 invoices paid late in Q4 (up from 311 in Q3) at a value of \$6,716,950;
- Department of Housing and Public Works – 2062 invoices paid late in Q4 (up from 1733 in Q3) at a value of \$18,545,030;
- Department of Women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Multiculturalism – 6 invoices paid late in Q4 (up from 2 in Q3) at a value of \$9,937;
- Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety – 116 invoices paid late in Q4 (up from 57 in Q3) at a value of \$350,669;
- Department of Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games – 21 invoices paid late in Q4 (up from 17 in Q3) at a value of \$624,959;
- Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small Business – 34 invoices paid late in Q4 (up from 20 in Q3) at a value of \$665,624.

The on-time payment data for Quarter 4 2024-25 for the Department of Youth Justice and Victims Support and the Department of Transport and Main Roads remains unavailable to the date of this submission, despite being a month and a half after the end of the financial year. It should also be noted that there is other data from the Department of Youth Justice and Victims Support not being released also, but that will be canvassed in another statement of reservation.

Of these departments, it is particularly concerning that the Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small Business is already experiencing late payments for invoices to small businesses. The Minister’s refusal to answer questions regarding his own department’s failures highlights the Crisafulli LNP Government’s inability to deliver on promises.

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As a newly created department, they do not have the same legacy issues relating to financials and had an opportunity to immediately begin the implementation of the On-Time Payment Guarantee, in preparation for rollout to all other government departments and agencies.

Their failure to implement a policy “guarantee” they are responsible for indicates that this so-called “guarantee” by the Crisafulli LNP Government is likely to be a promise made on one side of an election with no intention to keep it on the other side of the election.

QUEENSLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

THE LNP WON'T DELIVER BUNDABERG'S SECOND FIRE STATION

It was a Labor Government that secured the land for the second Bundaberg Fire and Rescue Station on Ashfield Road in July 2024 and it was Labor that subsequently committed to building that fire station for the people of Bundaberg.

It's now been confirmed that the Crisafulli LNP Government will not build a second Bundaberg Fire and Rescue Station – despite it being desperately needed.

The Queensland Labor Opposition was alarmed to learn from the Commissioner of the Queensland Fire Department that the very concerning reports from local Bundaberg Firefighters, as outlined in the tabled document, were more than justified.

Firefighters in the tabled document were quoted as saying:

“People don't realise just how stretched we are”

“Our call numbers are rising, and we're being forced to do more and more – all while our facilities fall apart around us.”

“We're not just disappointed by this budget. We're alarmed”

“We've seen call-outs increase significantly year on year, and expecting a single station to carry the load is not only unrealistic – it's dangerous”

“It's getting harder and harder to crew trucks, especially during work hours and that means full-time staff from the Bundaberg station are being pulled further afield to respond, which delays help for people who need it urgently and frequently leaves Bundaberg township unprotected.”⁵

The tabled article further demonstrated that the Crisafulli LNP Government did not care about community safety in Bundaberg, by informing readers that:

“The Fire Minister did not respond to questions regarding a timeline for the funding of a second Bundaberg Station”.⁶

The Commissioner, upon being presented with this document, confirmed to the estimates hearing that the firefighters' fears were justified by advising the committee that:

Commissioner Smith: ... There is no commitment for the delivery of that in the forward timetable.
...⁷

⁵ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/Tabled%20Paper%201%20-%20Nikki%20Boyd%20MP,%20Member%20for%20Pine%20Rivers.pdf>

⁶ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/Tabled%20Paper%201%20-%20Nikki%20Boyd%20MP,%20Member%20for%20Pine%20Rivers.pdf>

⁷ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing,%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, Page 38

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This flies in the face of the needs outlined by frontline firefighters and the Queensland Labor Opposition will not rest until the Crisafulli LNP Government delivers on this much needed infrastructure.

ANOTHER LNP CULTURE WAR

The Queensland Labor Opposition received some clarity from the Commissioner of Queensland Fire Department, regarding the Crisafulli LNP Government's scandalous conduct, when it comes to recognition of First Nations people on the ceremonial plaques of new Fire and Rescue Stations.

The Queensland Labor Opposition revealed through the tabling of Right to Information documents, that the Minister's Chief of Staff, Angus McCaffrey on behalf of the Minister's Office didn't "*think it's appropriate*"⁸ to acknowledge traditional owners on a ceremonial plaque, in an email, sent less than an hour after the original draft plaque was provided to Mr McCaffrey for approval.

From: Angus McCaffrey <Angus.McCaffrey@ministerial.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, January 7, 2025 12:56 PM
To: Steele Davies <Steele.Davies@qfes.qld.gov.au>; Ian Andrew <Ian.Andrew@ministerial.qld.gov.au>
Cc: Cathy Knapp <Cathy.Knapp@qfes.qld.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Approval for Drayton Fire & Rescue Station Plaque

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of Queensland Fire & Emergency Services. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hey Steele,

Could you please remove the acknowledgement – I don't think it's appropriate where areas are undetermined.

Cheers,
Angus

From: Steele Davies <Steele.Davies@qfes.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, January 7, 2025 11:57 AM
To: Angus McCaffrey <Angus.McCaffrey@ministerial.qld.gov.au>; Ian Andrew <Ian.Andrew@ministerial.qld.gov.au>
Cc: Cathy Knapp <Cathy.Knapp@qfes.qld.gov.au>
Subject: Approval for Drayton Fire & Rescue Station Plaque

Hello Angus and Ian,

In preparation for the Drayton QFR Station opening, I am seeking approval for the attached proposed plaque.

Note with respect to the Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners, QFD have included the non-specific acknowledgement as the area is undetermined at this time.

If you could provide approval ASAP to allow adequate time for the plaque to be developed.

Thanks
Steele

Inspector Steele Davies
Ministerial Liaison Officer
Cabinet, Executive & Ministerial Services
Queensland Fire Department
1 William Street, Brisbane
M: [REDACTED] E: steele.davies@fire.qld.gov.au
Web: www.fire.qld.gov.au

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When asked about this matter, the Commissioner stated:

Commissioner Smith: ...our standard approach in our process involved recognition of generic recognition and determination where a determination had been made. There were some concerns flagged with that. We had a conversation with the minister's office in relation to that and, based on that conversation, we have adjusted our process in order to formally recognise where determination has been made¹⁰...

⁸ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/Tabled%20Paper%204%20-%20Hon%20Mick%20de%20Brenni%20MP.%20Member%20for%20Springwood.pdf>

⁹ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/Tabled%20Paper%204%20-%20Hon%20Mick%20de%20Brenni%20MP.%20Member%20for%20Springwood.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, page 38-39

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The previous Labor Government introduced this respectful acknowledgement, and always ensured that appropriate consultation and protocols were followed, through the relevant departmental and local channels.

This initiative was subsequently formally endorsed in the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy Action Plan 2023–2025,¹¹ which celebrates the initiative as action item 4.4, as below.

- 4.4 **Sign new and replacement Fire and Rescue Service Stations and/or composite QFES facilities,** and replace signage in existing stations with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander place names through engagement with relevant advisory bodies to ensure accurate and respectful signage.

Despite emails in the tabled RTI documents clearly showing that senior public servants pointed the Minister's Office towards this widely consulted upon document, drafted by experts in the subject, the Minister's Office continued to make it clear to senior public servants that it was still the "*Minister's position to remove the Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners.*"



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The long trail of emails in the tabled RTI documents, also demonstrated that Queensland Fire Department public servants were, what can only be described as perplexed, by this decision. Clearly trying their best, on multiple occasions, to verify that this decision was in fact correct, and providing, what can only be described as "frank and fearless" advice, in the face of pressure from a Crisafulli LNP Government and party, who love nothing more than a culture war.

When the Minister was first asked about this matter in the estimates hearing, she started referring to a pre-prepared brief about the Crisafulli LNP Governments directive to remove First Nations acknowledgements from LNP inspired blue email signature blocks.¹³ In the Queensland Labor Oppositions view, Minister Ann Leahy was not listening to the question properly.

This LNP culture war was then further interrogated by the Queensland Labor Opposition with additional tabled RTI documents¹⁴ revealing that, not only was the acknowledgement deleted from the plaque, but a

¹¹ <https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/many-voices/resource/b26c7462-3f5a-4775-b213-7e2a1ecbacb2>

¹² <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/Tabled%20Paper%203%20-%20Hon%20Mick%20de%20Brenni%20MP,%20Member%20for%20Springwood.pdf>

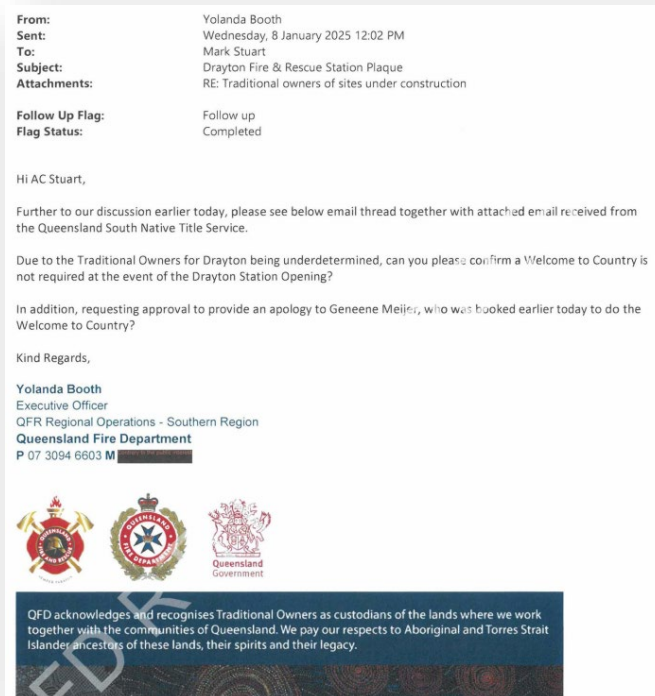
¹³ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing,%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, page 39

¹⁴ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/Tabled%20Paper%202%20-%20Hon%20Mick%20de%20Brenni%20MP,%20Member%20for%20Springwood.pdf>

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traditional Welcome to, or Acknowledgement of, Country ceremony was also cancelled as a result of the ministerial intervention.

This resulted in Queensland Fire Department staff being required to request permission from senior officers to, and then subsequently, formally apologise to a respected First Nations Elder, who had already been invited to conduct the ceremony.



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The Minister claimed ignorance on this matter, despite organising a filmed media statement in her 1 William Street office relating to the very same Right to Information, when it was initially publicly revealed by 7 News Toowoomba¹⁵ in March this year. The Queensland Labor Opposition reserves the right to further pursue some of the answers or non-answers provided during the estimates hearing on behalf of all Queenslanders.

The Queensland Labor Opposition also notes significant concern that the Member for Southern Downs, upon raising a point of order during the questioning on this subject, stating:

Mr LISTER: *Point of order, Mr Speaker: can I suggest that the question before us pertains to the decisions and expenditure of government and that this is beneath the consideration.*¹⁷

Despite the best endeavours from the Queensland Labor Opposition, the Minister and her office still have questions to answer about why they feel it is appropriate to use their authority to litigate culture wars and perpetrate disrespect to our First Nations community.

¹⁵ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/Tabled%20Paper%20%20-%20Hon%20Mick%20de%20Brenni%20MP.%20Member%20for%20Springwood.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?mibextid=wwXlfr&v=2033944040416841&rdid=OJQEYea8YjhC9nnz>

¹⁷ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing.%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, page 40

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Why did the Minister and her office go against the “frank and fearless” advice of public servants, and why did they choose culture wars over common decency and respect?

It is not “*beneath the consideration*”¹⁸ of the elected Members of the Parliament, and the Queensland Labor Opposition will continue to stand up for First Nations People and fight against the Crisafulli LNP Government’s culture wars of disrespect.

PROMINENCE REPORT TAKES A BACK SEAT UNDER THE LNP

While the Queensland Labor Opposition was pleased to hear from the Commissioner that Kristen Hilton continues to advise and provide independent assurance in relation to the implementation of the recommendations from the *Complaints Management System Review*¹⁹, the Queensland Labor Opposition were disturbed to learn that the Minister clearly doesn’t take the matter seriously.

When asked if she had met with Ms Hilton, the Minister could not speak to the matter at all, and simply said:

*Ms LEAHY: We will have to go back and check our diary records. We will come back at the end of the session with regard to that.*²⁰

The Queensland Labor Opposition had already undertaken this work based on published diaries and indicated this to the Minister, who after numerous interjections and points of order from government Members, didn’t respond further on the matter during the Queensland Fire Department session.

Upon her staff consulting the Ministers diaries before the final committee session, the Minister briefly confirmed what the Queensland Labor Opposition indicated. She had indeed not met with this critical stakeholder, despite conceding that it is indeed:

*Ms LEAHY: ...important cultural reform work...*²¹

Based on the initial response from the Minister which made no reference to the work being undertaken the Queensland Labor Opposition has serious reservations over whether the Minister is across her brief on the matter.

The Queensland Labor Opposition calls upon the Minister to read up on the issue and meet with Ms Hilton to get briefed before the next sitting of Parliament, so the Minister can demonstrate that she is giving this important matter the respect it deserves.

THE LNP’S STATION OFFICER CRISIS

The Queensland Labor Opposition forced the Crisafulli LNP Government to admit that almost 30% of all Fire and Rescue Service Station Officer positions across the state are currently substantively vacant, with the Minister advising at the end of the hearings that there were 196²² substantively vacant positions and 511²³ substantively filled.

This is a huge number of senior frontline positions not filled and concerningly, the Minister seemed oblivious to the seriousness of this shortfall.

¹⁸ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing.%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, page 40

¹⁹ <https://www.fire.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-09/Complaints-Management-System-Review-Final-Report.pdf>

²⁰ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing.%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, page 45

²¹ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing.%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, page 76

²² <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing.%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, page 76

²³ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing.%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, page 76

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Due to the limited time allowed for consideration of the Queensland Fire Department, with only two short blocks of non-government questions allowed, there was no time to interrogate this matter further.

However, the Queensland Labor Opposition will continue to hold the Crisafulli LNP Government to account on this issue and will continue to make further inquiries, to ensure that the Minister begins to take this issue seriously and take all necessary steps to have it resolved with priority.

LABOR'S APPLIANCE DELUGE SYSTEMS

The Queensland Labor Opposition learnt that despite the record investments from the previous Labor Government to deliver and retrofit life-saving deluge systems to medium attack Rural Fire Service Queensland appliances, the project has now stalled under Minister Leahy.

The Minister could not answer how many of the 699²⁴ medium attack appliances have had, or even will have these life-saving deluge systems fitted, citing insufficient data.

The Queensland Labor Opposition also learnt that despite the previous Miles Labor Government providing the funding for hundreds of these upgrades, and the original tender going out and closing late last year - well over 8 months ago - a rescope tender still has not been issued to the market under this Minister's watch.

Now when or whether these critical safety upgrades go ahead is under threat, under the Crisafulli LNP Government.

LABOR'S ADDITIONAL RURAL FIRE SERVICE QUEENSLAND POSITIONS

The Miles Labor Government delivered 114 additional FTE positions for the Rural Fire Service Queensland through the Emergency Services Reform Program, and now it has been revealed that the Crisafulli LNP Government is on the go-slow in recruiting these positions.

The Minister was forced to reveal that 24²⁵ of the 47 positions due to be filled in 2024/25 have not been filled.

These FTE were delivered to provide critical support to our volunteers across the state, and it is a sad indictment on the Crisafulli LNP Government, that after almost 10 months in the job, they can't even provide sufficient oversight to ensure that these positions are filled.

The Queensland Labor Opposition will be following up on this matter, to ensure the frontline volunteers get the support they need to keep our communities safe.

LABOR FUNDING DELIVERS RURAL FIRE SERVICE APPLIANCES

After interrogating the delivery of Rural Fire Service Queensland appliances, the Queensland Labor Opposition revealed from the Minister that no Rural Fire Service Queensland appliances have been ordered from the LNP's first 2025/26 Budget.

The Minister also revealed that 101²⁶ Labor funded ²⁷appliances, ordered through previous Labor Government appropriations, are scheduled for delivery in 2025/26. This represents years of hard work and increased funding delivered by Labor through the Emergency Services Reform Program.

²⁴ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing.%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, page 45

²⁵ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing.%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, page 76

²⁶ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing.%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, page 76

²⁷ https://s3.treasury.qld.gov.au/files/Budget_2024-25_BP3_Capital_Statement.pdf, page 67

Queensland Labor Opposition

The Queensland Labor Opposition will hold this Minister to account, to ensure that the budgeted appliances for 2025/26 get ordered in a timely way, to see them into the hands of volunteers where they are desperately needed.

FORWARD CAPITAL WORKS PLAN

The Queensland Labor Opposition believes there is a concerning lack of transparency from the Minister in relation to the forward capital works plan, as requested by the Queensland Labor Opposition through pre-hearing Question on Notice No. 18²⁸.

While the Queensland Labor Opposition accepts that operational needs of the department may change based on the changing needs of the community, it is important that this decision-making process is open to scrutiny and done in a transparent way.

It is clear the document exists, with the Commissioner referencing the “*forward timetable*”²⁹ in his response to questioning regarding Bundaberg’s Second Fire and Rescue Station.

The Queensland Labor Opposition calls on the Minister to release the document.

DISASTER RECOVERY AND VOLUNTEERS

LNP POLITICISING THE STATE’S DISASTER RECOVERY

The Queensland Labor Opposition has concerns that, despite the Chief Executive Officer of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority attending most meetings, when the Minister meets with State Recovery Coordinators, the Chief Executive Officer of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority was missing from the Minister’s diary³⁰ when a similar meeting was held with Mr Andrew Cripps³¹ - the North and Far North Tropical Low State Recovery Coordinator and Mr Drew Alexion - Principal Advisor to Mr Cripps.

It is a matter of public record that both Mr Cripps and Mr Alexion³² are historically active political operatives within the LNP.

To see a meeting of this nature being undertaken with no listed impartial public servants present is a serious integrity concern, that should send chills through the spines of all that read this.

The Queensland Labor Opposition will continue to hold the Crisafulli LNP Government accountable for this shameful ‘jobs for the boys’ approach, especially when it comes to matters as serious as the recovery of our state from natural disasters.

VOLUNTEER INQUIRY FUNDING

Despite a very clear line of questioning to the Acting Director-General, the Queensland Labor Opposition is no clearer on whether there is any funding set aside in this year’s Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers budget to deliver any potential recommendations from the Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland.

²⁸ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/on%20Notice%20from%20the%20committee%20and%20responses,%20Minister%20for%20Local%20Government%20and%20Water%20and%20Minister%20for%20Fire,%20Disaster%20Recovery%20and%20Volunteers%20-%20Copy.pdf>

²⁹ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing,%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, page 38

³⁰ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/Tabled%20Paper%20-%20-%20Nikki%20Boyd%20MP,%20Member%20for%20Pine%20Rivers.pdf>

³¹ <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Members/Former-Members/Former-Members-Register/Former-Member-Details?id=2129847612>

³² <https://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/27yearold-lnp-staffer-matt-derlagen-selected-for-townsville-electorate-of-mundingburra/news-story/d8e0e73c859313999971c43911dfcb53>

Queensland Labor Opposition

The inquiry was formally announced by the Crisafulli LNP Government in November last year, well before any 2025/26 Budget submissions would have been drafted.

While the Queensland Labor Opposition accepts that the exact quantum of funding will depend on the exact recommendations made by the Committee, we also assert that any responsible government who takes the inquiry seriously, would plan ahead and set aside funding for any potential outcomes.

The Queensland Labor Opposition suspects, that indeed, no funding has been set aside, which leads us to our concerns outlined in the next section.

WHISTLE-BLOWER PROTECTIONS MEAN NOTHING TO THE LNP

It is a long standing and important convention, that an opposition, and indeed any Member of Parliament can protect whistle-blowers when asking questions of the elected government of the day.

It should send chills through the spines of every Queenslanders who values free speech and a transparent government, that upon the Queensland Labor Opposition referencing whistle-blowers feedback regarding comments potentially made by the Minister, the Member for Theodore and the Member for Southern Downs challenged this long-standing convention.

In fact, the Member for Southern Downs went as far as to say:

***Mr LISTER:** Point of order, Mr Speaker: can the member refer to exactly what protection she is speaking of and how they are relevant to our activities in the Queensland parliament considering the appropriation before us? Otherwise, she should disclose.³³*

Pressuring the Queensland Labor Opposition to reveal the identity of whistle-blowers, is completely unacceptable and the Queensland Labor Opposition will not compromise these brave individuals, who provide information on the condition of anonymity, to help let the sunshine in on this Crisafulli LNP Government.

This was a shameful act by the Crisafulli LNP Government Members and was an attempt to silence whistle-blowers who had told the Queensland Labor Opposition that, the Minister has been openly saying - words to the effect of - wanting the inquiry into volunteering in Queensland to deliver 3 to 4 recommendations, with no costs to government.

It will be interesting to see what the inquiry does deliver, and the Queensland Labor Opposition will be interrogating any recommendations and subsequent funding - or perhaps lack thereof - vigorously.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Queensland Labor Opposition values all volunteers in Queensland and believes that volunteers are the cornerstone of any strong society. We thank them for their service to Queenslanders.

EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERS ADVISORY FORUM

The Queensland Labor Opposition now has even more questions regarding the Crisafulli LNP Governments conduct in relation to the Emergency Volunteers Advisory Forum and will be taking further steps to investigate the claims made by the Minister in relation to the Emergency Volunteers Advisory Forum.

It simply does not pass the pub test that there was a letter allegedly sent on 30 July from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, to the Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers, regarding a “review” into the Emergency Volunteers Advisory Forum.

³³ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing.%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf>, page 51

Queensland Labor Opposition

At the estimates hearing for Minister Purdie it was clear that he had likely never heard of the Emergency Volunteers Advisory Forum let alone written a formal letter to his Ministerial colleague regarding this important group, just days earlier.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

The Queensland Labor Opposition is concerned at the apparent lack of a plan when it comes to planned community awareness campaigns for the 2025-26 financial year, which the Minister outlined in the Crisafulli LNP Government response to pre-hearing Question on Notice No. 20³⁴.

The fact that the Minister was unable to provide any advice on the planned activities, and spend for these important campaigns, with Disaster Season just around the corner, is alarming.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

TROY THOMPSON

The decision to suspend Mayor Troy Thompson for 12 months on full pay was made by Local Government Minister Ann Leahy.

This decision came after Troy Thompson wrote to the Minister requesting suspension on full pay with the Minister confirming “*Mr Thompson has agreed to be suspended from his position for 12 months on full pay*”³⁵

This has sparked significant community anger in Townsville, with residents questioning why a mayor under Crime and Corruption Commission investigation should continue to receive more than \$225,000 a year while performing no duties. This arrangement has fuelled perceptions of a lack of accountability and wasted ratepayer funds, particularly given Mr Thompson’s ongoing public commentary and interference in council matters during his suspension.

During the examination of the local government portfolio, the Minister was asked multiple times to confirm whether the Crime and Corruption Commission report on Mr Thompson had been received by herself or her office. The Minister responded:

Ms LEAHY: *Could the member for Springwood perhaps give us a title of that particular report he is referring to?*³⁶

To which the Manager of Opposition Business replied:

Mr de BRENNI: *there would only be one report the CCC will have provided into Troy Thompson to the minister. If she has it, she knows what it is called. I am asking will she release it?*³⁷

The Queensland Labor Opposition sought clarity by rephrasing and re-asking the question, but each attempt was met with the same refusal or a shift away from the issue.

This was not a one-off evasion; it was a consistent position maintained throughout the exchange, despite several opportunities to give a factual answer.

³⁴ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/on%20Notice%20from%20the%20committee%20and%20responses,%20Minister%20for%20Local%20Government%20and%20Water%20and%20Minister%20for%20Fire,%20Disaster%20Recovery%20and%20Volunteers%20-%20Copy.pdf>

³⁵ <https://www.news.com.au/national/queensland/politics/queensland-government-suspends-troy-thompson-as-mayor-of-townsville-city-council/news-story/cb63b3814aa681d1efd1935cfe4c897>

³⁶ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing,%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf> Page 66

³⁷ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing,%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf> Page 66

Queensland Labor Opposition

The persistent refusal by Minister Leahy to answer any questions about Troy Thompson leaves the public without basic information on whether the Crime and Corruption Commission's findings are in the Crisafulli LNP Government's possession and whether recommendations are being acted upon.

Such stonewalling reinforces perceptions of secrecy, undermines trust in the Minister's commitment to transparency, and raises doubts about the Crisafulli LNP Government's willingness to hold local leaders accountable.

The Crisafulli LNP Government was also unable to say whether Mr Thompson would be reinstated when his suspension ended. This means that Mr Thompson could return to office in November. Withholding information on whether the Crisafulli LNP Government has received the Crime and Corruption Commission's report, or any details on the next steps for Mr Thompson, leaves the Townsville community in a prolonged state of uncertainty and frustration.

This lack of transparency not only undermines public trust in both the council and the Crisafulli LNP Government but also prevents residents from having clarity on when, or if, the city's leadership turmoil will be resolved. In the meantime, the absence of clear timelines or decisions risks further eroding confidence in local governance and prolonging the reputational and operational damage to Townsville.

It should be noted that during the estimates hearing, Minister Leahy said that she would answer the question at the end of the hearing after checking information, but the hearing concluded, and the answer was not provided. It was then surprising to read in the paper on Tuesday, 12 August 2025 that "*Her office has since confirmed it was not in possession of the report*". Why wasn't this answered on the Friday night?

WATER

EMU SWAMP DAM ABANDONED

When questioned on Emu Swamp Dam, the Minister conceded there is no allocation in the budget, handed down by the Crisafulli LNP Government for Emu Swamp Dam, stating:

Ms LEAHY: ...*further project investigations and design work to be undertaken to provide more certainty of the project's viability prior to seeking any further investment decision.*³⁸

This decision effectively abandons a project long championed by the Southern Downs community as a cornerstone for water security and agricultural expansion.

The Member for Southern Downs has been one of the project's strongest advocates, regularly highlighting its importance in helping the region manage drought, support primary production, and attract new investment. He has stressed that Emu Swamp Dam would provide long-term water reliability for both urban and agricultural users, strengthening the resilience of local communities and industries. In the hearing, he sought clear commitments on when and how the state might support the project.

The Minister's responses provided no clear pathway for funding or next steps, nor any timeframe for reconsideration. The Member for Southern Downs built his reputation on advocacy for Emu Swamp Dam, yet his rhetoric has noticeably shifted now that he sits in a Crisafulli LNP Government that has chosen not to fund it, a change that will not go unnoticed by his own community.

CRESSBROOK DAM – SAFETY UPGRADE IGNORED

Despite clear safety requirements and the need to protect downstream communities, the Crisafulli LNP Government has confirmed:

³⁸ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/C20252026-6FEB/8%20August%202025%20-%20Proof%20-%20Public%20Hearing.%20Brisbane%20-%20Estimates%202025-26.pdf> Page 70

Queensland Labor Opposition

*Ms LEAHY ...the 2025-26 state budget does not allocate specific funding towards the council's Cressbrook Dam upgrade project...*³⁹.

This failure to allocate even preliminary funding signals that the project is not a priority, leaving critical dam safety works stalled.

Cressbrook Dam is a critical water supply asset for the Toowoomba region, yet it is currently subject to urgent safety upgrade requirements under Queensland's dam safety regulations. Toowoomba Regional Council is progressing an upgrade program to meet an October 2025 compliance deadline, but the absence of confirmed state funding places timely delivery of these works at risk.

When questioned during the estimates hearing, the Minister confirmed:

*Ms LEAHY ...the 2025-26 state budget does not allocate specific funding towards the council's Cressbrook Dam upgrade project.*⁴⁰

and sought to avoid taking responsibility by stating:

*Ms LEAHY ...the responsible owner of significant dam infrastructure is actually the Toowoomba Regional Council.... the works are the responsibility of the council.*⁴¹

This deflection ignores the fact that local governments, including Toowoomba Regional Council, have formally sought state assistance to meet safety obligations that are beyond their financial capacity to deliver alone⁴². The refusal to commit funding or even acknowledge a shared responsibility for meeting regulatory deadlines leaves the community exposed to prolonged safety risks and undermines confidence that the Crisafulli LNP Government is willing to partner with councils on critical water infrastructure.

APPOINTMENT OF FORMER LIBERAL NATIONAL PARTY MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT LACHLAN MILLAR TO GLADSTONE AREA WATER BOARD

The estimates hearing revealed that the Gladstone based representative Tina Zawila has been replaced by former LNP Member for Gregory, Lachlan Millar on the Gladstone Area Water Board. The Minister for Water confirmed, Mr Millar has been appointed to the role. This change removes a locally based advocate with direct knowledge of Gladstone's water challenges and replaces them with a political appointee whose former electorate was in Central Queensland's interior, hundreds of kilometres away.

The Queensland Labor Opposition probed the Minister on the rationale for the appointment and whether the decision aligned with the Crisafulli LNP Government's stated commitment that "*the jobs-for-mates era is over.*" Questions focused on whether the Minister declared a conflict of interest before placing Mr Millar on the Gladstone Area Water Board. The Minister avoided directly addressing this, instead emphasising Mr Millar's experience as an irrigator, while sidestepping the loss of local representation and the perception that political connections, rather than merit, drove the decision.

Mr Millar served as the Member for Gregory from 2015 until the 2024 Queensland election. His appointment to the Gladstone Area Water Board less than a year later raises fears that decisions on water security, infrastructure investment, and future planning will now be made without a strong local voice.

The Queensland Labor Opposition reserves it right to articulate further reservations during the debate.

³⁹ Estimates Hearing Transcript

⁴⁰ Estimates Hearing Transcript

⁴¹ Estimates Hearing Transcript

⁴² <https://www.queenslandcountrylife.com.au/story/8874333/queensland-bush-councils-call-for-state-to-fund-dam-safety/>

ESTIMATES PROCESS

The Budget Estimates process is a cornerstone of our democracy in Queensland. For years it has been an opportunity for elected Members of Parliament, in particular non-government Members of Parliament to ask questions of Ministers and senior public servants to hold the elected government to account.

During the 2024 estimates process, the former Labor Government under the direction of then Labor Premier Steven Miles insisted that additional transparency measures were put in place to ensure that non-government Members of Parliament had ample opportunity to hold the elected government to account. These included:

- Providing crossbench Members of Parliament the ability to ask a pre-hearing Question on Notice for any Minister, regardless of if they were a member of the portfolio committee.
- Strictly allocating government and non-government Members of Parliament time in respect of questions. That being that government Members of Parliament questions should not exceed 30% of the total allocated time and the remaining time, 70% for non-government Members of Parliament.
- Of the time allocated for non-government Members of Parliament it should be proportioned between Opposition and crossbench Members of Parliament, based on the proportion of the makeup at the time.
- Only one opening statement per Minister for their entire portfolio of no longer than five minutes, with the Premier allocated no longer than 10 minutes.

These transparency enhancements to the Budget Estimates process, introduced by the former Labor Government, were discarded by Premier David Crisafulli and the LNP Government.

This is despite in 2020 the Courier Mail revealing the then LNP Leader of the Opposition's views on the Estimates process, reporting:

- He [David Crisafulli] said that if the government did not accept *"the need to make changes"*, he would introduce them as Premier from the first hearings of the next term in 2024 – if the LNP wins power at the 2024 election.

The changes that were being referred to included:

- increasing the time available to examine the expenditure to ensure adequate questioning can occur;
- an Opposition or cross bench member to chair the committees to help ensure a fairer go;
- limiting the opportunity for 'Dorothy Dix' questions from Government members which exist simply to allow ministers to wind down the clock.

While on paper there was more time overall for the hearings, the way in which Government Members conducted themselves with points of order to chew up time, and the removal of the 70% vs 30% time split, resulted in less time for the Opposition and Crossbench to ask questions to hold the government to account.

These actions were the very things that then LNP Leader of the Opposition David Crisafulli criticised. In the article referenced, he said:

"We've also seen ministers answer questions directed to independent public servants and Government members interrupting with tedious points of order to use up Opposition members' time."

Queensland Labor Opposition

It is the Queensland Labor Opposition's view that it is clear that the promises made by the then LNP in Opposition have been broken. This Budget Estimates there was nothing revolutionary about the way the hearings were conducted - 'dorothy dixers' still occurred and frivolous points of order were constantly taken.

Further information and analysis about the 2025 Budget Estimates can be found in the Statement of Reservation attached to the report on the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2025*.

CONCLUSION

The 2025 Budget Estimates process was an opportunity for the Crisafulli LNP Government to deliver on its promises – promises to reform, to do better, for a fresh start. Instead, the bar was set so low it was on the floor.

Instead of delivering for Queensland, the Crisafulli LNP Government is delivering for itself. When it comes to accountability, this process laid bare the truth of a government that has failed to live up to its own words. What resounds is that the Crisafulli LNP Government continues to choose secrecy over transparency and political games over genuine accountability.

The Crisafulli LNP Government's obsession with self-interest over public interest was glaring. The people of modern Queensland expect a government that acts for them, not for themselves.

They want a government that embraces the values of openness, fairness and integrity – after all, that's what they were sold at the 2024 Election.

Instead of being an opportunity for genuine interrogation of the 2025 Budget, the Estimates process was muddled to avoid scrutiny. By placing political convenience above the democratic process that is Budget Estimates, the Crisafulli LNP Government outed itself as out of step with the priorities of Queenslanders.

This is not the "fresh start" that was promised, it is a step back.

Queenslanders deserve better.



MARGIE NIGHTINGALE MP
MEMBER FOR INALA
DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF
THE COMMITTEE



MICHAEL HEALY MP
MEMBER FOR CAIRNS
SHADOW MINISTER FOR TOURISM
SHADOW MINISTER FOR JOBS AND
TRAINING



JOAN PEASE MP
MEMBER FOR LYTTON
SHADOW MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS
SHADOW MINISTER FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE AND OPEN DATA

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE QUEENSLAND LABOR OPPOSITION

APPENDIX – MEDIA ARTICLES

Unwelcome questions

Leahy pleads ignorance as First Nations snub sparks fly

Hayden Johnson

An Indigenous elder was offered an apology after Ann Leahy's office intervened to cancel a welcome to country ceremony at the opening of a new fire station – but she insists she has no knowledge of the incident.

The emergency services minister told Parliamentary Estimates she “wasn't aware of any cancelling of any welcome to country event” or a decision to remove the acknowledgment of traditional owners from a plaque at the Drayton Fire and Rescue Station.

A Right to Information document provided to the opposition suggested Ms Leahy's chief of staff Angus McCaffrey suggested to a Queensland Fire Department executive the acknowledgment be removed.

“He (Mr McCaffrey) was aware of the policy and has reaffirmed the minister's pos-

ition to remove the acknowledgment of traditional owners in locations where the traditional owners are undetermined,” a QFD email on January 7 noted.

Manager of Opposition Business Mick de Brenni said the “buck stops with ministers” and asked Ms Leahy: “Did you decide to remove any acknowledgment of traditional owners from this plaque and did you decide to cancel the welcome or acknowledgement of country?”

Ms Leahy said she was “not aware there was a cancelling of the welcome to country”.

Mr de Brenni noted an internal QFD email on January 8 requested approval from an acting commissioner to “provide an apology” to the Indigenous elder “who was booked earlier today to do the welcome to country”.

“The department wanted to apologise to this elder for this

decision,” he noted. “Do you know whose decision it was?”

Ms Leahy maintained she was unaware of the incident, prompting Mr de Brenni to draw outrage when he quipped: “Minister, do you have a problem with First Nations people?”

Separately, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Minister Fiona Simpson acknowledged many Closing the Gap targets were not on track and conceded the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention was not trending well.

“It was not on track under the previous minister and it is still not on track,” she said.

“In the last 10 years under the previous government there was a 288 per cent increase in the number of First Nations people on remand.

“That goes to the issue of addressing early intervention and the cycle of crime.”



Minister Ann Leahy.

State political editor

Suspension saga drags on

Caitlan Charles

The acting Local Government Director General has refused to say whether or not embattled, suspended Mayor Troy Thompson (pictured) will be returned to his position in November.

Questions around Mr Thompson's 12-month suspension were dodged in Queensland government estimates as Local Government Minister Ann Leahy refused to reveal if her office had possession of the Crime and Corruption Commission investigation report.

Officials dodge queries on CCC report into Mayor

Ms Leahy eventually took a question on notice regarding whether she was in possession of the report but again refused to answer it.

Mr Thompson was suspended last year after questions were raised over claims he made during the campaign, including around his military service and university degrees.

He was suspended for 12 months on full pay.

Manager of Opposition Business Mick de

Brenni pushed the Minister in estimates on whether she had possession of the long-awaited report into Mr Thompson, but she continued to deflect, repeating that he had stayed in office for 200 days under Labor.

Mr de Brenni asked Ms Leahy twice if she was in possession of the report, both times she dodged the question.

"I think that question, given the confidentiality around the CCC,

would be best directed to the CCC," she said.

Ms Leahy also refused to be drawn on whether or not she would release the report to the public.

She added, when pressed, that it was a matter for the CCC when reports were released.

Acting DG Joshua Hannan was asked if Mr Thompson would be returned to office at the end of the suspension period.

"Due to the na-

ture of the circumstances in relation to investigations and the legal and professional privilege of all stakeholders involved, it would be inappropriate for me to comment any further on the matter," he said.

Mr Hannan had a similar answer when MP Nikki Boyd asked if the department provided advice around Mr Thompson's remuneration during his suspension.

He also would not be drawn on "next steps" following Mr



Thompson's 12-month suspension.

MP James Lister repeatedly said the questions from Labor were "enlivening" speculation about "activities that may or may not have occurred" in relation to the CCC.

Councils seek dam support

BY ZAC BRAXTON-SMITH

COUNCILS in rural and regional Queensland have called on the state government to fund dam safety upgrades to ease the burden on ratepayers.

Letters between six regional mayors and the Minister for Local Government and Water, Ann Leahy - published by Toowoomba coun-

cil in January - addressed the issue of \$380 million needed for dam safety upgrades.

The upgrades seek to protect people living downstream of the dams and preserve water supplies.

The total included \$270 million for safety improvements at Cressbrook Dam near Toowoomba, which would involve widening the spillway and raising the crest

to ensure the dam can pass larger volumes of water.

Southern Downs Council estimated Connolly Dam, near Warwick, needed \$70 million in safety upgrades, subject to further testing of the dam wall and spillway.

"We write seeking to partner with the state government through a funding program to help ease the burden on Queensland's

ratepayers," the November 29 letter read.

"Without support, the cost burden will fall directly on the shoulders of ratepayers, who themselves have limited capacity to pay, particularly as they endure the current cost of living crisis.

"Another alternative for some ... could be to weigh up whether it is cheaper to purchase those properties

considered at risk in order to have the dam no longer classified as refractable."

Ms Leahy said in a December 19 letter that the state was committed to supporting councils through funding and investment opportunities such as the Works for Queensland program.

"Where dams present intolerable risks to downstream communities,

dam safety upgrades are a long-standing regulatory requirement to ensure public safety," she said.

"I encourage [councils] to continue to develop business cases where they intend to come to the government for significant funding support as this provides important evidence in the assessment of requests and underpins good decision making."



Ann Leahy

Leahy: We don't have the CCC report on Thompson

Caitlan Charles and Nikita McGuire

The Queensland Local Government Minister's office says it is not in possession of a Crime and Corruption Commission report into Troy Thompson.

On Friday, Minister Ann Leahy went toe-to-toe with Labor's Mick de Brenni over whether or not the government was in possession of the

report in estimates.

The CCC is investigating claims made by Mr Thompson, Townsville's suspended mayor, during the election campaign.

He was suspended on full pay.

During the hearing, Ms Leahy repeatedly deflected from answering any questions on Mr Thompson that were asked by members of the Opposition.

"I think that question, given

the confidentiality around the CCC, would be best directed to the CCC," she said.

The government was also unable to say whether he would be reinstated when his suspension ended.

This means that Mr Thompson could return to office in November.

Ms Leahy later said she would answer the question at the end of the hearing, but then later claimed she had already

answered the question.

Her office has since confirmed it was not in possession of the report.

However, Labor's deputy leader Cameron Dick asked why Ms Leahy had created confusion instead of providing "certainty".

"Ann Leahy signed off on Troy Thompson's year-long, \$250,000 ratepayer-funded holiday and is now refusing to say whether she will reinstate

him in just a few months' time," Mr Dick said.

He added that the government was only answering questions when it was "politically convenient".

On Friday, Mr Thompson reiterated to the Bulletin that he refuted all claims raised with the CCC.

"I look forward to returning to office as the democratically elected mayor in November," he said.