


Speech by

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MEMBER FOR INALA

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (6.23 pm): I rise to make a contribution to debate on the Appropriation Bill for the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, and I will be restricting my comments to the Attorney-General's part of the portfolio. One of the most disconcerting aspects of the Attorney-General's estimates hearing was the section dealing with the Crime and Misconduct Commission. On the morning of the hearing the Attorney-General announced that he would be appointing a committee to review the CMC. This was a frightening *deja vu* experience for anyone who recalls the Borbidge government taking over the treasury benches and almost immediately announcing a review of the then Criminal Justice Commission. This government has dusted off the Borbidge government play book and run with it in a manner that is breathtaking. Then the Attorney on a number of occasions linked funding and reassuring of the CMC with the CMC undertaking reviews of matters which are not a priority for the government. His answers seemed to indicate that he failed to understand that the CMC is an independent body and the government should have no view as to what reviews the CMC undertakes.

This statement by the Attorney clearly illustrates his lack of respect for the independence of the CMC—

At the same time that I am having discussions with the CMC about funding and how it is going to contribute to the efficiency targets set by the government, I just say perhaps some resources could be reprioritised.

The Attorney-General made comments about the continual complaints he receives from barristers about the provision of transcripts by the State Reporting Bureau. When asked for details, he took the question on notice and then provided advice that he had received three letters. To make a decision about government expenditure such as that provided for court transcription services on the basis of three written complaints must be unprecedented. The Attorney also failed to provide any comfort to the committee that there will be an appropriate level of protection for confidential and sensitive information, particularly in matters such as those involving the PIM and the COPIM or criminal organisations. This is particularly in light of the New South Wales experience. In fact, his comment that 'the member ought not be concerned about these issues' certainly failed to allay any of my fears.

The Attorney also spoke at estimates about the closure of the specialist courts, including the Murri Court, the Drug Court and the Special Circumstances Court. When asked if he had visited them, he answered that he had poked his head into the Murri Court once over 12 months ago but could not recall how long that was for. He also said that he had not visited the Special Circumstances Court and that such a visit was 'highly unlikely now because I have abolished it'. In a total embarrassment to the Attorney, I was able to advise him that the Special Circumstances Court was actually sitting that same day. In fact, his lack of knowledge of what the spending cuts will mean to organisations because he does not even know what they do showed that his decisions to cut spending will have unforeseen consequences across the whole of Queensland.

Budget Paper No. 4 shows a saving from the changes to the specialist courts and referrals as being \$35.7 million over four years. I am therefore puzzled by an article in the *Courier-Mail* dated 27 October 2012 titled 'Closures court trouble' which quotes the Attorney's office as saying that it has released new figures and its total savings from axing these diversionary courts is \$7.827 million over four years. I ask the Attorney if he would please explain how that figure has been revised and how the budget documents will now be reviewed and where cuts will be made to compensate for the additional nearly \$30 million in savings that was budgeted for but will not be realised.

There are many aspects of the estimates hearing that I could highlight but time constraints prevent me from doing so, so I will finish by referring to the disdain shown by the Attorney in relation to the changes to the May Day holiday. The Attorney was questioned about what consultation had been undertaken by the previous government and the fact that an online survey was conducted with 85 per cent of the 24,000 responses in favour of moving the Queen's Birthday holiday to October. The response by the Attorney was misleading in that he said the move to October was in the interests of Queenslanders who want a public holiday in the second half of the year. This had clearly been achieved by moving the Queen's Birthday holiday to October. However, more worrying was his admission that he had failed to consult communities likely to be adversely affected by the change and the fact that he laughed and sniggered when asked questions about Labour Day. However, his disdain for the workers of Queensland was clearly evident in the fact that his director-general was unable to answer a question about the historical significance of celebrating Labour Day in May and when providing the response on notice furnished a two-sentence response that was simply not good enough.