




Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (10.10 pm): I rise to contribute to the 2016-17 budget estimates process in relation to the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee. We examined the allocated budgets for all of the relevant ministers: the Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland and the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and their respective chief executive officers. I firstly commend all of those relevant departments that do the work in the background to provide the fine detail of how taxpayers' money is spent throughout the Queensland Public Service to ensure that service delivery of the highest level is achieved throughout the state for the people of Queensland. Our committee—and I thank all of those on it—all know the workload that we have. I make special mention of the secretariat and thank them for their outstanding work in the various and broad areas that we cover such as health, domestic violence, communities, disability services and child safety.

There have been numerous attacks by the LNP during estimates and again in this place today on the child safety minister, and those members should hang their heads in shame. Since coming into this place I have learned through mistakes and experience that there is a time to be a politician and a time to be a parliamentarian, and on that I am not afraid to make mistakes. I take exception to those who attempt to apportion blame to the minister for the very tragic loss of young Mason Lee. To my mind it is most disgraceful. To the members opposite who constantly attack the minister on this I say, 'Shame on you! Do not use this place to politicise the death of a child.' It strikes me as a new low, and we should all be doing what we can—our measured best—to ensure that this tragic case is not repeated. I commend the minister for her professional and appropriate response in having this tragic case independently reviewed and employing more staff to adequately resource this vital and important sector. The previous Newman-Nicholls government slashed 200 staff: shame on the LNP!

On a brighter note, I see a significant investment in the combined \$12.9 million to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child protection system through co-leading and facilitating the development of an action plan for these vulnerable children. There is \$10 million to address family support and child protection services and a trial in seven discrete Aboriginal communities of early intervention services. In the disability sector we saw a 10 per cent increase, or \$1.7 billion, and we will need it as we transition into the NDIS. I commend the minister and the department for their enormous amount of work in this area.

Health is an enormous portfolio. We have a record budget of \$15 billion to ensure that the important and vital area of service delivery in our 17 hospital and health services is done appropriately throughout the state of Queensland. Of course we need to see that increase in the Health budget as we have seen the cuts from the federal LNP government. Typical! Some of the great things we have seen delivered is the nurse-to-patient ratio and employing more nurses in this vital space. I also see an increase in funding for the Queensland Ambulance Service of \$39.8 million to ensure that prehospital

service delivery is well resourced. As we can see in the estimates process, that funding goes towards recruiting 110 paramedics to provide enhanced roster coverage to better manage increased demand for ambulance services in our state.

There are a number of other key areas such as prehospital thrombolysis to advanced care paramedics to ensure the early recovery of those people having a heart attack out in rural and remote areas of this state so that they get the best possible care, and I commend the minister for that.