




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (9.51 pm): I rise to speak on the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's report on the 2016-17 budget estimates process. The committee made one recommendation—that the proposed expenditure be agreed to. It was a pleasure to have the portfolio areas of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services added to our committee remit in February of this year. One of the most important hallmarks of any government is how it delivers the services Queenslanders need and depend on when they are at their most vulnerable. Surely there is no Queenslander more vulnerable than a child or family in distress.

The committee heard that the total operating expenditure to deliver targeted early intervention, support and recovery services to vulnerable Queensland families will exceed \$1 billion in 2016-17 and will include: two new Family and Child Connect services, new and enhanced domestic and family violence services, perpetrator interventions, integrated response trials, training for front-line professionals and home safety upgrades as part of the continued rollout of reforms under the *Not now, not ever* report—and I acknowledge the new Wellbeing Service recently opened by Minister Fentiman in my electorate at Zillmere and I thank her. It will also include \$45.7 million for intensive family support services across the state to assist families with multiple and complex needs; \$10 million to support the expansion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family support and child protection services; and \$1.8 million to establish the Office of the Child and Family Official Solicitor, to achieve better outcomes for families and children involved in child protection court proceedings.

The continuation of funding over two years for the delivery of parenting support for families through the Triple P program was a key initiative I raised with the minister during the estimates hearing. I have spoken many times in this House about my support for the Triple P program and the hundreds of families that have participated in Triple P sessions I have organised in my own electorate. I believe that positive, encouraging and evidence based programs like this provide practical tools that strengthen families and, in so doing, build resilience in our local communities. Financial inclusion programs, such as the Good Money stores and 20 financial resilience workers included in the budget, do likewise and were also discussed during the hearing.

Combating social isolation experienced by seniors, the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility project business cases, NDIS trial sites, jobs, demand for services, training and workforce requirements and readiness initiatives were raised in committee questioning of Minister O'Rourke. I was pleased to see \$5 million allocated to NDIS readiness initiatives in the budget and I thank the minister for her continued advocacy of people living with disability in my electorate and across Queensland as our communities make the significant transition to the NDIS.

Turning now to Health, in 2016-17, the Queensland Health budget will exceed \$15 billion, with the bulk of this—\$12.6 billion—to go to the 16 hospital and health services to meet growing demand for front-line health services. However, despite pressure from rising demand, the minister outlined for the

benefit of the committee that Queensland hospitals are undertaking more surgery and seeing more patients through emergency departments than ever before.

The number of Queenslanders waiting longer than clinically recommended for a specialist outpatient appointment has been slashed from 100,000 when we came to government to fewer than 60,000. The health system is also delivering strong elective surgery performance, with 98 per cent of category 1 and category 3 patients having received their elective surgery within clinically recommended times, as well as 94 per cent of category 2 patients over the last financial year.

These are strong results, and I am proud to be a member of a government that has rebuilt the nursing workforce through new nurse-to-patient ratio legislation, our nurse graduates program and the introduction of nurse navigators; revitalised the Mental Health Act and improved mental health services; and continued to invest in our QAS with additional paramedics, vehicles and kit. My electorate of Nudgee and all of Queensland will be well served by these investments.

I would like to reflect now for a moment on the conduct of the hearing. I have watched, assisted with or participated in estimates hearings for many years. I believe in the estimates process as a genuine opportunity for scrutiny. When ministers come genuinely willing to answer questions about their respective portfolio expenditure and committee members likewise come prepared to ask genuine questions rather than attempt to score cheap political points, the public interest is served. This was not the case for the first half of our hearing.

I appreciate the tremendously emotive nature of child safety. None of us can help but be moved by it and we must all be moved to greater action, but in no other workplace would one colleague, or in this case four, condone yelling at and verbally attacking another in the workplace. This is what occurred. It did not serve vulnerable children and families. It did not serve the public interest. It only served to besmirch us all in this House.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge and thank Ministers Dick, Fentiman and O'Rourke for the genuine willingness they displayed to answer questions related to their portfolios. I would also like to acknowledge the chief executive officers of agencies within the committee's portfolio area, my fellow committee members, Auslan interpreters, Hansard and the committee secretariat. I commend the report to the House.