




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (10.20 pm): I rise to speak to the Appropriation Bill and in response to the report of the committee examining the budget estimates for communities, child safety, domestic and family violence, disability services and seniors. What we saw from this year's budget and estimates process was a dog whistle of calls by both ministers claiming record spending, yet, as we see in Child Safety performance, outcomes and key performance measures under this Labor government have dropped significantly.

I, like most Queenslanders, was disturbed to hear the Minister for Child Safety refuse to accept that the protection of children who have been abused is her responsibility. I was deeply disappointed at the overall lack of accountability and oversight of the child safety portfolio displayed by the minister in her responses to questions. The limited time available to examine the portfolio undermined the process, given the significant level of intervention wielded by the department over families and abused children.

The minister has failed to explain adequately why it took her almost four months to release the March performance data, and most concerning was the fact that this information was not being used to inform forward policy direction. Despite claims by the minister of major policy directions and reforms occurring in meetings with the department in October 2015, under questioning the minister failed to explain gaps in her diary, which was supposed to contain this critical briefing information in response to investigation time blow-outs. When asked specific questions regarding the actions of the minister around being briefed on specific issues relating to the Caboolture Child Safety Service Centre she stated that she had not been briefed on this issue specifically.

What has become clear from the estimates process is that the minister or the government have no plan to address the growing backlog of child safety investigations not being commenced in required time frames and the ongoing risk to children being left in abusive situations. We heard a lot of talk from the minister during estimates but have seen very little action when it comes to child safety resources for front-line workers.

The minister noted on a number of occasions that the protection of children is everyone's business. Yes, protecting children is a role we must all take seriously; however, the minister would know that the issue of protecting children from a statutory perspective relies on the proper resourcing of the child safety department to ensure it can do its job. Not everyone can put new resources on the front line so that vulnerable children can be protected, so that cases can be investigated in a timely manner. It is the minister's job to resource her department to do the job they are legislated to do. Whilst protecting children is indeed everyone's business, the minister must make it her business to resource her department so that it can protect the very children it is there to protect.

I want to address the hearing process for disability services which highlighted a lack of forward planning and direction from the Labor government, which has walked away from disability services policy. People living with a disability in Queensland can expect nothing more from this Labor government after it was revealed a significant lack of forward investment beyond NDIS to address the

significant level of unmet need for Queenslanders living with a disability. With more than 22,000 people on the register of need, and growing, the minister was unable to explain what happens to these people over the next three years as they wait in hope of the NDIS eventuating. I express my concern at how the government was willing to override the recommendations of both audit and legal advice to re-fund organisations that had demonstrated serious noncompliance with their contractual obligations for service delivery.

In conclusion, I express my disappointment about this year's estimates process and what it delivered—lots of talk and no real action from a government asleep at the wheel on critical social policy issues.