




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 17 June 2016

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; DUTIES AND
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (11.36 am): The Palaszczuk government is a government that believes in equality, opportunity, fairness and reform and we are optimistic about Queensland's progressive future because we believe in innovative ideas, long-lasting economic and social reform and of course a fair go. This year's budget reflects just that. The outcomes of the 2016-17 budget will mean a better working, more inclusive and more prosperous Queensland. We know that reducing disadvantage, poverty, discrimination, violence and abuse here in Queensland will lead to better economic outcomes for our state's future.

In my role as the Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence I have now been to visit hundreds of our neighbourhood centres, resource centres, community recovery hubs, youth centres, respite centres, childcare centres, family support services and domestic violence services and refuges right across Queensland. I visited these organisations because I was there to listen—listen to their concerns and vision for the future, and now we are acting on what we have heard. That is why we are investing in community services and infrastructure and leveraging community efforts to assist with cost-of-living pressures and create new pathways to jobs.

Our community services industry is doing great things and our budget will ensure that in the future community services can be an even more powerful force that drives Queensland's equity, productivity and prosperity and of course provide rewarding jobs and careers, because every Queenslanders deserves the chance to reach their full potential to participate equally in our economy and society. The widening gap between the rich and poor is unacceptable and must stop.

We know that reducing income inequality is one of the best ways to help vulnerable Queenslanders and grow the economy. We know that income inequality makes economies more volatile and susceptible to sudden downturns in economic growth. It is not only us that says it. Both the IMF and the OECD recognise that wealth redistribution is vital to a sustainable and prosperous society and economy, which is why it still baffles me as to why when the LNP was in government it ripped funding from 362 community organisations. Not only that, they bullied, intimidated and silenced our community organisations through the disgraceful gag clauses in their funding agreements. The only conclusion that we can make is that they have nothing but contempt for the vulnerable and disadvantaged people who use those services.

If the opposition leader's budget reply speech is anything to go by, the alternative government would have Queensland go back to the last century. The budget reply made no reference to domestic and family violence funding. In fact, the only time women were mentioned at all was in a biblical reference to 'covet thy neighbour's wife'.

The Palaszczuk government is leading the way with positive policies and implementing innovative, long-lasting reforms that will allow all Queenslanders to grow together. One of the areas where my government has shown significant leadership across the nation is in investing in financial inclusion programs to build community and family resilience. I am pleased that we have allocated \$12 million over the next two years towards a special financial assistance package. We are leading the way as part of an innovative corporate-community partnership with Good Shepherd Microfinance and the National Australia Bank, which will provide the expertise and financial capital to open the first Good Money stores in Queensland. This means that Queenslanders facing serious money worries will have access to safe, fair and affordable finance to get their lives back on track.

Good Money stores will provide fair, safe and affordable options for loans and other programs for people on low incomes who would otherwise have to go to exploitative and expensive payday lenders. This initiative will help people battling financial strife with a statewide network of 20 financial resilience workers, including counsellors, who will provide advice and a wide range of specialised support, including no-interest loans and subsidies for utilities payments. On top of support from Good Shepherd Microfinance, NAB has committed \$130 million in loan capital to microfinance programs nationally, including Good Money. The first Good Money stores will open in Cairns and on the Gold Coast, where community groups report a high need for the help that they offer.

The Palaszczuk government recognises that the solution to growing our economy is to create a fair and equal society where every Queenslander has the right to participate equally in our economy and society. Of course, no society can achieve its potential without the full engagement of women—not just in political life, but across the community sector, business and industry. It is not just the right thing to do; it is smart economics. The UN, the OECD and the World Economic Forum all recognise that women's contribution to the economy produces fairer societies and growth in new sectors. It is largely acknowledged that violence against women and gender inequality are strongly related.

I am so proud that the Palaszczuk government is delivering almost \$200 million across the government to invest in a package to tackle domestic and family violence. Part of this package will focus on communication strategies to tackle the underlying attitudes and behaviours that feed the cycle of violence in our communities, with \$9.6 million over four years for a campaign aimed at challenging and changing those attitudes. We will also be investing \$10.3 million over four years to roll out perpetrator intervention services across the state, as well as \$26.3 million over four years to roll out eight high-risk teams as part of an integrated service response, which is about saving women's lives. There is also an allocation of \$42.4 million over four years to roll out further specialist domestic and family violence courts across the state. We recognise that a large part of preventing further violence is identifying high-risk perpetrators early and reaching out to help victims of domestic and family violence as soon as possible.

Earlier this year, I participated as an observer in a men's domestic violence perpetrator program. It was an incredibly confronting experience, but it revealed to me how vital these programs are if we really want to see real generational change and a shift in culture away from violence. The Palaszczuk government believes that every Queensland woman or child who is a victim of domestic and family violence should have a safe place to go and access to support and services no matter where they live. That is why we have allocated \$8.7 million over four years to establish two new DV shelters—one in Charters Towers, where we have identified an immediate gap. I would like to thank the member for Dalrymple for his continued advocacy in ensuring that his community receives this vital service. As well, another shelter will be located in a rural or remote area. We have also committed \$43.1 million over four years for new and enhanced specialist and generalist services to address service gaps, including counselling services, sexual assault services, a step-down women's health service and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I am immensely proud that the Palaszczuk government's second budget has decidedly invested in local neighbourhood centres. Neighbourhood centres provide crucial programs and services for local communities that stand the test of time. That is why neighbourhood centres are also a key part of our efforts to address domestic and family violence. We are working towards improving the capacity of neighbourhood centres, enabling them to provide long-term, viable, quality support services. We are investing \$6.9 million over four years through our Neighbourhood Centre Investment Strategy. An allocation of \$3 million will go towards the employment of new Community Connect workers in 12 neighbourhood centres across the state. These new specialist Community Connect Workers will allow further support to people who are affected by domestic and family violence.

My department has also allocated a further \$6.4 million in capital works funding for neighbourhood centre replacement and ensuring vital upgrades and maintenance. We have also committed to reallocate funding to Queensland's neighbourhood and multipurpose community centres to restore their peak body. Further funding for neighbourhood centres will ensure the future of our vital community centres. It is about putting our money where our mouth is and spending a budget that is for the benefit of all Queenslanders. There are, of course, other funding commitments across child safety, communities and drought support and some other exciting initiatives in my own area. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): You can confirm that you have my approval for that. Thank you.

Leave granted.

Keeping children safe and supporting vulnerable families to stay together, of course, remains one of our Government's top priorities.

While we are working hard to deliver a range of child and family reforms, we realise a lot more work needs to be done.

Especially as we look for better ways to deal with Indigenous disadvantage.

That's why we have allocated more than \$1 billion in this year's State Budget to deliver targeted support to vulnerable Queensland families.

Early intervention, and keeping families together is a strong focus of our reforms and we know that it works.

We've seen more than 7000 families have already been referred by Family and Child Connect Services to the services they need.

I am delighted our final two Family and Child Connect Services will be rolled out across the state this year.

And I am equally pleased that the first Indigenous Family Wellbeing Centre will open its doors in September.

This Budget contains \$13.8 million for these vital services including funding for two Family and Child Connect services in Mount Isa/Gulf and Cape York/Torres Strait that will complete the state-wide rollout.

It also includes \$45.7 million for complementary Intensive Family Support Services that assist families with multiple and complex needs.

However, the disproportionate number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who end up in the child protection system is totally unacceptable.

It is nothing short of a crisis—and we need to do a whole lot better.

And we know we must work earlier and better to support them, their families and communities.

Our new community-run and community-controlled Family Wellbeing Services will focus on cultural knowledge and understanding both key to improving children's safety, wellbeing, belonging, identity and participation in community life.

The first new Family Wellbeing Services will be rolled out in September in areas of great need—Roma, Mackay, South Burnett and Moreton Bay—with further services across 20 locations to be fully operational in 2017.

Other key budget initiatives include \$3.3 million for support to young people leaving care through the Next Step Care initiative, and \$6.6 million over two years from 2015-16 for the delivery of Parenting Support for Queensland Families.

This program gives Queensland families access to the world renowned Triple P Program which improves the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents.

We want Queensland families and communities to be empowered, to become stronger, more capable and more resilient.

By delivering these vital child and family support services, we are one step closer to doing just that.

As I have continued to mention, our community groups and services are the backbone of the support we provide for our State's most vulnerable.

We believe that Government should be there to lend a helping hand when communities are facing a tough time—particularly when hit by natural disaster.

That is why additional funding of \$4 million in 2016-17 has been provided to extend existing community support measures in drought declared areas to strengthen resilience of drought affected Queenslanders.

This is on top of additional funding of \$2 million in 2016-17 and \$500,000 ongoing from 2017-18 to modernise the Community Recovery Disaster Management system.

Turning now to my electorate of Waterford, where it is great to see the Palaszczuk Government investing in capital works that are vital to our community.

We welcome \$15 million funding to install safety barriers on the M1 in Loganholme.

But \$4 million for a new cycle and pedestrian pathway in Loganlea, which includes a bridge over Scrubby Creek, is also vital infrastructure for our local community.

As cycling continues to gain popularity in the area, it is important to ensure the safety of pedestrian, cyclists and motorists.

Shared user paths are also a great way to encourage members of the community to get outside and be active, leaving their cars at home whenever possible.

Waterford residents will also benefit from public transport reduction in the number of zones, fare prices and children under 15 traveling for free on weekends.

The Palaszczuk Government has invested in our local schools in this budget—with a record \$12 billion invested in education this year.

Included in this funding is \$100,000 for a disability upgrade at Beenleigh State High School.

And of course, it is great to see \$3.4 million over five years to support the development of the new integrated domestic violence service response trial in the Logan-Beenleigh area.

This means that local service providers and agencies with a role in keeping victims safe and holding a perpetrator to account—police, hospitals, domestic violence services, corrections staff—will be able to collaborate and work together following the same model.

The funding package also includes dedicated funding for an integrated domestic and family violence support service for local migrant and refugee women.

A culturally appropriate domestic violence service is vital for Logan, which is proudly one of the most multicultural cities in the world.

And as our community grows, we must ensure that victims of domestic and family violence from multicultural and multi-faith backgrounds have somewhere to turn to and feel safe.

This year's budget not only shows that Palaszczuk Government cares about people.

It shows that we have a plan. And we are delivering on it.

We understand that by investing in our community services, and investing in infrastructure that supports our communities, will reduce inequality, and lead to further, sustainable, and fair economic growth into the future.