




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2016

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION 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) (10.24 pm): I start by again thanking the chair of the committee for her management of the committee's important work. The Palaszczuk government continues to implement the recommendations from the child protection commission of inquiry to ensure we are doing everything we can to keep our children safe, and we are investing a record \$1 billion to support Queensland children and families.

Our renewed focus on early intervention has seen 10,000 families receive help before they come into contact with the child protection system. We have introduced specialist investigation teams and early intervention programs targeted at dads and invested \$2.9 million to improve family engagement services. We have 166 more front-line child safety staff than we did two years ago—after the LNP cut 225 full-time jobs from Child Safety during its term in office.

Frankly, I think the people of Queensland expect more from their opposition. It is, after all, their job to ask questions, to probe the actions of government and to inject their own alternative ideas into the debate. That is not what we saw at estimates. We saw an opposition more interested in shouting and interrupting than in a sensible debate. I was asked approximately 25 questions and experienced approximately 74 interjections—three to one.

Tonight I will specifically address a number of statements made by the opposition in their statement of reservation contained in the report. The opposition expressed concern at limited time available to examine my portfolio. The committee minutes show that the timetable was endorsed unanimously by the committee following a motion moved by the member for Caloundra.

The opposition also claimed in their statement of reservation that there is a gap in my diary reports. Let us be clear: my published diary refers to my regular meetings with the director-general, in the same way as the previous minister for child safety's did. After demanding a copy of the agenda for that meeting, the member for Mudgeeraba was caught out when it was revealed that she already had it in front of her as part of an RTI request that she had continually referred to over the previous couple of weeks.

I have repeatedly stated that I was briefed about quarterly data by my director-general at the 28 October meeting. However, as the member for Mudgeeraba well knows because, like my diary, it too is published online, the quarterly data does not detail any specific child safety service centre and no particular centre was flagged at that meeting. The continued suggestion that I have failed to act on concerns raised at that meeting about resourcing at Caboolture Child Safety Service Centre is simply untrue.

Finally, the opposition try to suggest that the Palaszczuk government is lacking a long-term plan to improve the child safety system. We are three years into a 10-year program of reform that is overhauling the child safety system. There are seven more years of reform ahead, but we have some runs on the board already: \$100 million invested in a new practice framework; \$45 million for intensive

family support services; Family and Child Connect services established; and \$150 million for family wellbeing services to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

The community and stakeholders rightly question whether the LNP are walking away from their previous bipartisan support for vital child protection reforms. As per our election commitment, we will continue to honour our bipartisan support for these important child and family reforms. Judging by their behaviour, the LNP appear to be walking away from some of these reforms simply in order to score more political points.

Before resuming my seat, I want to take this opportunity to provide an answer to a question I took on notice earlier today. In relation to that question, I can confirm that all children to whom the cipher refers are currently subject to assessment orders made by the courts as part of active investigations and matters before the Childrens Court and, as such, it is not appropriate that I comment further.