




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2017

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
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) (3.23 pm): The Palaszczuk government has delivered an incredible program of positive reform and investment in child safety and domestic and family violence prevention. There are few areas of government that are more complex or more important than the work done to protect vulnerable children in at-risk families. This budget goes beyond the repair of front-line services and invests in the vital staff and programs that will make a real difference to the lives of vulnerable people in our communities. This is a budget that is strong on the Labor values of standing up for vulnerable children, standing up for the victims of domestic and family violence, and standing 100 per cent behind the incredible staff who are saving lives each and every day.

Over the past two years, we have seen a far-reaching and significant reform of the child safety system, including making it mandatory for parents entering into a parenting agreement with the department to submit to drug testing, as we see an explosion of ice use across our communities. Yesterday in her budget reply speech, the member for Mudgeeraba once again revealed her position on protecting vulnerable people, which was to hurl insults at our hardworking staff who are literally out there saving lives. It seems that gone are the days of 2014 when the now leader of the LNP, the member for Clayfield, said in his budget speech that the issue of child safety should be above politics. The efforts of our professional staff are at the heart of this government's mission to keep children safe. Their work is life changing. They are saving lives and families—real people who need help. The Child Safety staff who carry out that work are the heroes.

As well as increasing front-line Child Safety staff by more than 10 per cent, we are creating career pathways that will keep more experienced staff actively engaged with vulnerable families on the front line, ensuring child safety support officers get the recognition they deserve with improved pay. They work incredibly hard and they deserve to be properly paid for the amazing work they do. Of the almost 300 additional staff to be employed in our \$200 million package, 236 front-line and front-line support staff will hit the ground in the next financial year and many of them will be deployed in ice corridors across our state where that terrible drug is inflicting horrendous damage on families.

Of course, this is a budget about delivering jobs because Labor values the dignity of work. Labor is lifting more people out of poverty and into work, recognising the protective factor that a job can have for parents and families. Our budget initiatives have received strong backing from the people who best know this important work. The Queensland Council of Social Service Budget Analysis says the budget 'will be good for vulnerable Queenslanders' and particularly praised this budget's commitment to tackling the impact of ice on families. QCOSS goes on to say—

With Queensland children and women continuing to be harmed in their home at an alarming rate, these new investments at the front line are strongly supported by QCOSS.

Professor Karen Healy, the national president of the Australian Association of Social Workers and a former child safety officer, said, 'The plan will save lives and provide better outcomes for families'. Joanne O'Shanesy, a child protection practitioner with more than 35 years experience, both in the community and within the department, said—

We have been heard and we are so excited ... we are going to have new child safety officers, new child safety support officers and additional admin officers to support those people to get the work done well and get the work done quickly.

Our record on child safety is clear: we are rebuilding the child protection workforce after the LNP cut 225 jobs from Child Safety when it was in government. We are backing the Child Safety staff who are out there saving lives every day by giving them the support they need to do their job. Of course, keeping women and children safe from violence remains one of the Palaszczuk government's highest priorities. The Premier appointed me as Queensland's first Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence to drive this reform and that is what I do each and every day.

In 2017-18, more than \$42.8 million is allocated for domestic and family violence support services in my department. Those funds support specialist service responses, including counselling support for victims and their children, behaviour change programs for perpetrators, court support and service system coordination support. We are well down the path of the implementation of all of the *Not now, not ever* recommendations, with 67 recommendations completed and work well underway on the remainder.

I am so proud that two new shelters announced within one month of this government coming into office have now been operating for over one year. We are providing additional mobile support and designing and developing two more shelters in Charters Towers and Roma. Our third budget builds on this with a commitment for two additional shelters to ease the strain on South-East Queensland shelters, which is an area that we know is experiencing a huge demand.

These shelters are the first new government funded shelters for women escaping violence in over 20 years. It is important to recognise that as we bring domestic and family violence out from behind closed doors more and more victims have the confidence to reach out for help, so we have to have safe places for them and their children to seek refuge. Encouraged by the success of the trial at Southport, we have also committed to the expansion of the hugely successful specialist domestic violence court. I am very pleased to see it expanding to my own local court at Beenleigh and to North Queensland through the court at Townsville.

Of course this budget also delivers for people in my electorate of Waterford, with early works for an upgrade to Logan Hospital, Cross River Rail—which will cut commuters' travel time to the city by up to 15 minutes—and important upgrades to the M1 which for years LNP members on the Gold Coast have repeatedly failed to deliver. Locally, we are investing in our schools with a \$1.8 million upgrade at the Beenleigh State High School, Loganholme State School and Mabel Park State High School.

One of the things I am most proud of is finally delivering bus services for the residents of Holmview. This has been an issue since the estate opened in 2009, and I want to put on record my thanks to Sam Channing and her son Adam as well as the hundreds of other residents who signed petitions and campaigned for this vital service with me. I thank them for their persistence in this campaign. I would also like to thank the Deputy Premier for listening and delivering.

It is Labor budgets that deliver better schools, better health care, better roads, better transport and better cities, no matter the postcode. This budget, like our others, shows that Waterford and the City of Logan have not been taken for granted. In our first term alone we have managed to not only reverse the cuts of the Newman-Nicholls era but go further and build a better, stronger and more connected Waterford. I am very proud of that.

I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated into *Hansard*. I confirm that I have sought your approval.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Has the minister sent an electronic copy to Hansard?

Ms FENTIMAN: I have.

Leave granted.

Returning to Domestic Violence Mr Speaker, important initiatives funded to tackle Domestic and Family Violence include new High Risk Teams in Cairns/Mossman, Brisbane and Ipswich in 2017-18, adding to the teams already established in Logan-Beenleigh, Cherbourg and Mount Isa/Gulf which ensures locally designed integrated responses to domestic and family violence in these areas.

And of course our investment in new and enhanced domestic and family violence services continues to target existing service gaps, including:

- counselling and support services for victims, children and young people,
- court based support,
- sexual assault services,
- post crisis step-down recovery support,
- telephone services
- perpetrator programs and
- services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Importantly we continue to invest in specialist services to support women who have experienced sexual assault, including assault within an intimate partner relationship.

We are also supporting and increasing capacity in the domestic violence service workforce. These incredible staff who manage highly sensitive and often traumatic cases every day deserve our greatest respect and support. The budget continues investment in the development of training for frontline professionals to support the delivery of quality services and to upskill workers, particularly in rural and remote locations.

While I am speaking about workers in the community sector, I am particularly pleased to see we are supporting frontline community service staff to get the recognition they deserve, with improved pay in line with Fair Work Australia's 2012 Equal Remuneration Order.

They work incredibly hard and they deserve to be properly paid for the amazing work they do.

Our frontline staff are making real differences in the lives of Queenslanders every day, and this Budget is supporting those staff in the critical work that they do.

This budget invests in our staff, ensuring that critical frontline child safety staff are supported in their work and are suitably rewarded for the amazing job that they do each and every day.

In last year's budget, Labor put money in to the neighbourhood centres that are at the heart of supporting our communities. We raised every neighbourhood centre up to a sustainable level of minimum funding and I am pleased that our neighbourhood centres have gone from strength to strength over the past year.

This budget also commits to capital funding for several new neighbourhood centres and upgrades to many others.

We know that a place to connect and access services is essential to a strong and stable community where families are not left behind.

We now also have 11 community connect workers to help facilitate connections between families needing help and the services available in their community. A further worker is due to start soon in Manoora.

And we are ensuring that families in need have a genuine alternative to payday lenders and rent-to-buy schemes through our innovative Good Money Stores in Cairns and the Gold Coast.

While only in their early days, more than \$44,000 has been provided through No Interest Loans.

These Stores will continue to thrive in the coming year, providing phone based information, financial counselling, referral to emergency relief and other support services.

But there is never a clearer demonstration of the need for community support than when our great state is hit by a natural disaster.

My own community of Logan experienced horrendous flooding and many families are still picking up the pieces.

I spoke recently in this house about the Logan Spirit and the many ways in which people supported each other through this natural disaster.

I want to thank all of the volunteers, emergency services personnel, neighbours and friends who stopped to help families right across Queensland to save what they could and stay safe.

My Department is responsible for human and social recovery and I want to take this opportunity to thank the hundreds of staff from across Government who stepped up to provide help when people were at their lowest.

While recovery continues for some communities hardest hit, more than 118,000 people have been assisted with close to \$30 million distributed through the Personal Hardship Assistance Grants and Immediate Hardship Assistance Payments.

For the first time we operated through an online system, allowing payments to be applied for and approved online and transferred directly to the person's bank account.

This led to payments being made up to 8 times quicker, and I'm pleased we've been able to modernise the system in order to provide that immediate support to people who have lost everything.

Mr Speaker, this Budget shows that the Palaszczuk Government is delivering on its commitment to restore frontline services to Child Safety and the community sector and investing extensively in helping vulnerable children and the victims of Domestic and Family Violence.

I am proud to be part of the incredible work done by our staff to change lives, to save lives, and I am proud to be part of delivering a Budget that stands behind them 100 per cent.