




Speech By  
**Hon. Shannon Fentiman**

**MEMBER FOR WATERFORD**

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Record of Proceedings, 8 August 2017

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL:  
HEALTH, COMMUNITIES, DISABILITY SERVICES AND DOMESTIC AND  
FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE**

 **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) (10.12 pm): I am very pleased to respond to the report of the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's consideration of my department's budget for 2017-18. I thank the committee chair, the member for Nudgee, committee members and committee staff. Key priorities for the government in child safety include more child safety staff, bringing the total this term to more than 400 front-line and front-line support staff; \$7.4 million to support families affected by ice; and \$6.9 million to support our wonderful foster and kinship carers through the non-government sector. Our key funding to tackle domestic and family violence includes \$5.8 million for support associated with specialist DV courts; two new shelters—and let us remember it was the Palaszczuk government that delivered new specialist refuges for women and children escaping violence in more than 20 years—and \$8.2 million over four years to establish high-risk teams.

In addition to the 400 child safety staff we have funded this term, our investment in the community sector has resulted in hundreds of new jobs, restoring community services and supporting organisations that were gagged and cut by the previous government. Opposition members of the committee were not interested in jobs or community support or even safety for vulnerable women and families. I note the member for Mudgeeraba spoke about domestic and family violence in her contribution to the debate tonight, but there was not one question from the opposition members on domestic and family violence—not one question. In fact, the member for Gaven's entire contribution during estimates was 12 words. As usual, their statement of reservation would give members the impression they were at a completely different hearing.

Firstly, let us talk about drug testing for parents suspected of using ice. I make no apologies for this tough new measure to keep kids safe. Let us set aside that this is the fourth or fifth position we have heard from the LNP on this policy and deal with the concern that they have raised. Yes, the tests are paid out of child related costs. That is because it is absolutely fundamental to the safety of the child that our child safety officers get the information they need to know, which is whether a parent is using ice. Let me be very clear though: there has been no reduction in child related costs for children as a result of this mandatory drug testing. Child related cost budgets are adjusted annually in response to need. The hypocrisy of the LNP is astounding because child related costs were cut by the LNP when it was in government by over \$1.9 million. The Palaszczuk government has restored these cuts with an extra \$2.6 million budgeted over the last two years. The opposition does a lot of talking about this, but it is the Palaszczuk government that has taken action.

Secondly, opposition members suggest that there has only been a two per cent increase in domestic violence support in the south-east region. The problem is it is simply not true. The opposition is reinterpreting information to try to suit a story it is trying to tell, but I want to be very clear for the

House. The opposition asked a question on notice about funding to existing shelters only, then tried to present that as the total domestic violence funding for the Gold Coast. Rather than an increase of 2.1 per cent let us be clear it has increased by 42.33 per cent since we have come to government. That is because when those opposite were in charge they cut funding to the domestic violence prevention centre on the Gold Coast by \$150,000. That is absolutely disgraceful. We would expect such misinformation from those who spent their time in government cutting domestic violence services and gagging them from speaking out on behalf of some of our most vulnerable.

Finally, the opposition in their reservation statement also ridiculously claim that there was no evidence of a plan to reduce reliance on residential care. No evidence, except for a press conference, a media release and stakeholder endorsement. In fact, it was just days before the estimates hearing that I stood with child safety experts and outlined our plans for an investment in professional foster care, the very thing that will help pull vulnerable at-risk children out of residential care. Again, the underwhelming opposition is just not interested in the facts. Those opposite missed an opportunity to genuinely engage and scrutinise the budget. They did not do their job. They asked questions about whether or not front-line staff were cut and they got the answers. They did not like them, but they got the answers. The Palaszczuk government is restoring child safety.