




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2018

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, Report

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (3.00 pm): I am pleased to talk on the estimates process and the estimates in this financial year's budget. The estimates process overall was disappointing over the two weeks. We only have to look at the analysis done by the ABC, which said that 20 out of the 32 non-government questions to the Premier were blocked or weakened. We also had John Mickel, a well-known Labor Party identity, saying that it was a protection racket by Queensland government MPs and that the hearings need an overhaul. He said that the ministers do not need protecting. Evidence of that is the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services. He did not need protecting. He answered the questions. He answered them straight, and he answered them without any problems, even though the member for Mansfield did try to pull me up a couple of times in the estimates process. The minister was quite across his brief. He knew what he was going to do, he knew what he had to say and he conducted himself in a manner where he let the information out. He was not scared of anything.

I do agree with John Mickel. I think we need to overhaul the estimates process so that ministers are scrutinised by government MPs and also non-government MPs. That is an important part of our democracy here in Queensland. It was a recommendation out of the Fitzgerald inquiry that we have transparency when it comes to the estimates process.

We raised with the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services some concerns about the longevity of compulsory photoelectric smoke alarms. I know the minister has done some research on this. This could potentially be another 'pink batts' situation, as stated by Keith Golinski on ABC Radio. Keith Golinski is the father of Matt Golinski, who lost his beautiful wife and children to a devastating fire. Keith has done some investigation into smoke alarms on the market and he is worried about the quality of the smoke alarms available to consumers. I called on the minister to investigate issues around insect infestation, and he has done that. I also asked that he provide some assurances that the photoelectric smoke alarm products on the market are fit for purpose and will last long enough to meet community expectations.

One of the concerns with these smoke alarms is that, if you take them down and try to clean out the insects or you open them, the warranty is gone. There is no warranty on some of these photoelectric alarms. The concern is that, as these photoelectric alarms are expensive, people will not put them back up or replace them. If there is a fire in the middle of the night, all of those fire alarms go off to try to get people out of the house. This is a safety issue that we have to look at.

We all supported the legislation in relation to the photoelectric alarms, and I agree with that legislation. The problem is whether we are doing enough to ensure that the providers of these alarms are making sure they are fit for purpose and they do have a warranty. If people do have to clean those photoelectric alarms, they should not be penalised if they have to replace them. People with tight budgets might say, 'I can't afford to do it this month,' and then they might forget about it and we may have an issue where houses do not have the photoelectric alarms.

Turning to recruiting, we need to attract more women into our Queensland fire service. We saw a 55 per cent reduction in the number of new female firefighters in Queensland in 2017. I am also concerned that the culture associated with sexual harassment and bullying that was so publicly highlighted in the 2014 Allison report has yet to be properly dealt with and may be acting as a barrier to new female firefighters applying to join the Queensland fire service.

I congratulate the commissioner, Katarina Carroll, for providing guarantees that there would be no operation issues between existing analogue and new digital radio network SES crews, even when travelling to areas with varying radio technologies. That is important, because during the wet season and cyclones in North Queensland we send our front-line men and women up there and we need to make sure they have the equipment and resources to communicate between all emergency services personnel. The commissioner did make it clear that the department would have to take it on notice.

We do not have the information back yet about fire crews being called out on code 1s. I know the minister has come back to our office and said that code 1 is an ambulance issue, but we want to find out how many times the Queensland fire service have responded to a code 1 medical emergency and have gone out before the ambulance. That is what we need to find out.