



Speech By
Barry O'Rourke

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 20 August 2019


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

**Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence
Prevention Committee, Report**

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (4.28 pm): I rise to speak in regard to the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee's examination of the budget estimates for the 2019-20 financial year. The estimates process allowed the committee to ask questions of Minister Miles, Minister O'Rourke and Minister Farmer. I congratulate the ministers, their staff and the government employees from the various departments. All were very well prepared and I appreciate the amount of work that takes place.

It was a great acknowledgement from Minister Miles as we heard about the great work done across Queensland's health services by the doctors, nurses, paramedics, allied health professionals and all the thousands of staff who have made the health system work to look after more Queenslanders than ever. We have seen a continual increase in patient visits to our hospitals, with more care being provided within the clinically recommended time frames.

Unlike the LNP, who cut thousands of staff from our health and other front-line services—did they really care about providing high-quality services to Queensland, or were they more focused on the cut, sack and sell agenda?—our Labor government has employed more doctors, more nurses and more allied health professionals than ever before. We are seeing more health services being provided in the regions to better meet the needs of our local communities. I would like to thank all the health staff, particularly those in Central Queensland, for the great work they do each and every day.

Minister O'Rourke reminded us that there is virtually nowhere in Queensland that has not faced the possibility of a disaster at some point in time. We live in a great place—one of the best places on earth—here in Queensland, but we seem to get more than our fair share of significant weather events. Queensland needs to be prepared for the possibility of severe storms, cyclones, bushfires and other weather events. I think we saw all of those last season. I know in Central Queensland we saw the worst fires around Baffle Creek, Mount Larcom and, of course, Stanwell, which led to the evacuation of 8,000 people at Gracemere near Rockhampton. Thanks must also go to the numerous volunteers who worked under extreme conditions to control these fires.

The department of communities is responsible for the human and social recovery aspects of disaster management in Queensland. Staff focus on the social, emotional and psychological wellbeing of individuals and communities. The community recovery ready reserve workforce is made up of more

than 2,000 public servants from across government agencies. The LNP sacked 14,000 public servants, so I am not sure how they were going to provide community recovery staff. Maybe they were going to outsource that, too. I would like to put on record my thanks to the community recovery staff for the great work that they do.

Minister Farmer praised the dedicated staff of her department, who work with some of Queensland's most vulnerable who need our help. They work with an ethos that every child, every young person, every woman, every man deserves the same hope and opportunities as the next. They have a very challenging job and we should all be thankful that they do it day in, day out. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to be over-represented in all areas of her portfolio and steps have been put in place to address this. We are seeing investment across all portfolio areas to meet the increased community needs. We have also heard about the great work of the 5,250 carers, who give their hearts and homes to the most vulnerable children, and the dedicated partner agencies and their staff.

Finally, I thank the committee secretariat and the Parliamentary Service staff for their assistance throughout the estimates process as well as Deaf Services Queensland for the interpreting services at our hearing.