



Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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 BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (4.33 pm): The lack of action of the Palaszczuk government to fully implement the *Not now, not ever* report is concerning. Even after 4½ years of government—we received this information during the estimates hearing—11 recommendations remain to be fully implemented. The Palaszczuk Labor government should be getting on with the job of delivering the *Not now, not ever* report rather than wasting time and money by commissioning a study on domestic violence perpetrator tracking and on giving domestic and family violence perpetrators paid leave. No-one in their right mind would think that giving wife-beaters 10 days taxpayer funded leave to rehabilitate is anything but a bad idea.

In the past 12 months—August 2018 to July 2019—alone there have been over 28,400 breaches in Queensland, an increase of 8.3 per cent, or more than 2,186 breaches, and 13 out of 15 districts have seen increases in domestic violence breaches. It is distressing to see that not only is domestic and family violence continuing to plague Queensland communities, it is becoming worse than ever before due to the reckless inaction of this government. When in government, the LNP introduced the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Bill 2011 and we funded new initiatives that provided safety upgrades to homes of victims. While Labor like to talk about domestic violence, the LNP provided real support and real action to tackle the issue.

The LNP remains concerned about the management of residential care. These are some of our most vulnerable kids and the system is failing them. Labor's residential care program is a costly experiment that is not working. Concerns about inadequate training and police call-outs are clearly being ignored by the government. Unfortunately, we are not seeing any significant gain following the LNP's child protection inquiry where the LNP allocated \$400 million to reform the system. The child protection system needs to provide better protection and care for children than the situation they were removed from, but sadly we are seeing more and more children entering care than ever before. Their outcomes are simply not improving.

We promised to reform a broken and unsustainable child protection system and we were making inroads. The Palaszczuk Labor government has all but forgotten why reform was needed and we are back to the bad old days of Labor failing our most vulnerable children and families. Child safety staff can only be as good as the system allows them to be. They are wonderful men and women working in

Child Safety. They have the hardest job to fulfil yet the government prefers to spend money on American consultancy companies rather than doing the right thing by workers and looking into what is going wrong. A fish rots from the top and a full top-down inquiry into the child safety department is urgently needed. The increasing calls from within and a reflection on the number of petitions being signed show that we have a problem. Kids in care on the Gold Coast are being let down, placed in residential care and virtually forgotten about. More needs to be done for these kids. Only the LNP can reform this broken department and the child protection system. Labor's child safety crisis started under Minister Fentiman and it has not improved under Minister Farmer.

During the estimates hearing it was revealed that the department issued not only one but two contracts to a United States based contractor, the latter of which started in May 2019, for almost \$95,000. This is an obscene waste of money and a major slap in the face for Indigenous Queenslanders. The initial contract should not have been issued in the first instance, but handing out a second one is appalling. It is another sign of the Palaszczuk Labor government having its priorities all wrong. Labor's child safety minister is aware of this failure and has done nothing about it. Looking after our most vulnerable kids should be Labor's priority.

It was revealed that the department will invest record funding of approximately \$1.6 billion to respond to child abuse and neglect. On behalf of those vulnerable Queenslanders, we will all hold this government to account in this vital area to make sure these kids get the services they need. We all know that much more needs to be done to end domestic and family violence and sexual violence. We need real action to address the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in child protection, in domestic violence and in youth services. The responses received at estimates do not give us confidence—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): The time for debate of this report has expired.