




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Record of Proceedings, 4 December 2020

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (11.42 am): It is a pleasure to rise to make my contribution in support of the 2020 appropriation bills before the House. Firstly, I congratulate the Treasurer on his first budget—a budget delivered in extraordinary times following a worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. I also join my colleague the member for Hinchinbrook and many others in congratulating you, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly. Having had the opportunity to work with you for three years on the health committee and another three years last term on the Ethics Committee, I know that you will do a wonderful job. My sincere congratulations.

This is a budget that delivers on our election commitments and a budget that charts our course from what has been a turbulent year to more prosperous, secure times ahead. Protecting Queensland jobs, delivering new Queensland jobs and providing access to the skills that Queenslanders need to retain or get a job remain the core principles that underpin everything this budget seeks to achieve. But of course budget speeches are, in the main, a recount of the investment we as a government are making in the people of this state.

Our government talks about bigger and better health facilities—more doctors, nurses and allied health staff; roads to help us get to our office on time and home to our families more quickly; more teachers and teacher aides and better education facilities to help our children have the best primary and secondary school years we can possibly offer them; and financial support for, and investment in, training, communities, jobs programs, our Made in Queensland trains, the arts and our Great Barrier Reef.

As I said earlier, this is a budget that delivers on our election commitments. In my community of Nudgee that means \$500,000 to expand and improve facilities at the after-school care at Boondall State School which aims to create a better learning and play experience for students and provides greater support for working parents who depend upon this vital service; \$150,000 to build a new prep playground for children at Virginia State School, my old primary school; \$300,000 to upgrade the administration building at Northgate State School; \$300,000 to build a new music and arts studio at Nundah State School; and \$100,000 in funding to resurface and irrigate the fields of the Kedron AFL football club. In addition, new safer stop, drop and go zones will be constructed at Boondall and Northgate state schools to keep students and staff safer as well as a park-and-ride expansion study delivered at Northgate train station and an accessibility upgrade of Banyo train station.

As the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the people whose interests I am charged with advancing are among the most important people in this state. They are the people who do not get such a great start in life. They are our children and young people who are part of a cycle of sadness that, as a parent myself, breaks my heart—and they are the ones I refuse to let be forgotten because every child deserves a life of opportunity and hope, not just my children and

not just our children but every child across Queensland. That is why I am proud to be part of a government that will not let our most vulnerable children be forgotten. Keeping Queensland children safe from abuse and neglect continues to be a top priority of our government. That is why this year's budget continues to provide funding for programs and services to keep children safe right across the state.

We will spend a record \$1.475 billion on the delivery of child and family programs and initiatives this financial year. We will invest \$281.5 million on the delivery of youth justice programs and initiatives this financial year and a further \$97.6 million on capital works, predominately on the new West Moreton Youth Detention Centre.

We will invest in initiatives that continue to build a united, harmonious and inclusive Queensland, because Queensland does not have multicultural communities; it is a multicultural community. Key programs to be invested in for 2020-21 include \$1.3 million for the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Assistance program; \$2.43 million for Community Action for a Multicultural Society grants to 19 organisations; and \$2 million for the Celebrating Multicultural Queensland grants program.

Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, you have reviewed and approved my budget speech for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

The speech read as follows—

Mr Speaker, this is the seventh year of our 10-year Supporting Families Changing Futures reform program—and we are committed to seeing it through in partnership with community organisations and for Queensland families.

We all know the best place for children is in safe, stable and loving homes and safe in their culture.

Wherever possible we want to divert Queensland families from entering the child protection system and early intervention is key to this.

That's why \$166.6 million will be allocated this financial year to continue building a family support system, providing earlier help to families and in turn preventing escalation to the child protection system.

We are also boosting our network of child safety service centres across the state by opening a new service centre in Ripley for the Southern Downs with \$2.1 million allocated for its fit-out.

We have also allocated an additional \$98.4 million to help manage increasing demand in the child protection system.

Deputy Speaker, COVID-19 has not only taken a toll on our economy and tourism, it has taken a toll on our most vulnerable.

The number of families with multiple and complex needs continues to grow, putting pressure on our system.

Almost three out of every four children coming to our attention are living in families with multiple risk factors, including mental health, domestic and family violence, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Many of these risks to children will and have been further compounded by unemployment and financial problems related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are focusing on achieving the best possible outcomes for families and children by investing in our kinship and foster care programs so children who cannot remain safely at home can be placed with families.

We are also focusing on supporting carers.

Between 2017 and 2019, the department delivered the first two years of a four-year, \$2.6 million foster carer recruitment campaign in partnership with Queensland Foster and Kinship Care.

While the 2019-20 recruitment campaign was partially postponed due to COVID-19, we know this is a successful way to attract more carers.

A shortened version of this campaign featuring a range of real-life carers speaking about their experience was held between July and September this year and resulted in a significant increase in expressions of interest.

We're currently developing the next phase of the campaign to roll out in 2021.

We're also investing \$65.5 million to build the base on which First Nations families, communities and community-controlled organisations will take the lead when it comes to responding to the needs of their own communities.

Our joint focus will be on true generational change. We'll do this by continuing our commitment to Family Participation Programs and Family Wellbeing Services—and, very importantly, by starting to delegate functions and powers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are subject to a child protection order, or at risk of entering the child protection system to a chief executive of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entity.

While there is a lot more work to do, the safety and wellbeing of children will always be at the heart of everything we do.

Youth justice is another major focus of my portfolio.

In this space, community safety has always been our top priority and that is why this budget continues to provide funding for programs and infrastructure to prevent and reduce youth crime across the state.

We will invest \$281.5 million on the delivery of youth justice programs and initiatives this financial year and a further \$97.6 million on capital works, predominately on the new West Moreton Youth Detention Centre.

We've invested more than half a billion dollars in early intervention programs and new detention centre beds, which we know is delivering results.

There's been a 30 per cent drop in the number of young offenders across the state since 2010. And a 23 per cent drop in the number of charged offences by 10 to 17-year-olds in the 2019/20 financial year compared to the previous financial year.

Mr Speaker, we are working hand in hand with communities to address the underlying causes of youth crime and get kids back on track.

We launched a five-point plan to target repeat offenders earlier this year after consultation with and feedback from communities across the state.

That has meant a new partnership with police to deliver co-responder strike teams to target crime hotspots and a trial of On Country programs in Mt Isa, Townsville and Cairns.

In this budget we will expand the co-responder program from five locations to six locations to include Mackay.

In the past 18 months we've seen the establishment of Community Youth Responses in Townsville, Ipswich, Logan, Brisbane, Moreton and Cairns—locally driven solutions that include after-hours diversionary services, cultural mentoring, flexi-schools and integrated case management for more complex young people.

Communities told us they wanted programs to get kids back to school and into jobs and we listened.

We expanded Transition to Success—getting young offenders back on track through education and training in 22 sites across the state.

These measures and new programs have helped reduce the number of young people offending across the state.

We've also invested in new youth detention centre beds.

This year a 16-bed unit was completed at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre and the 32-bed West Moreton Youth Detention Centre will be completed next year.

As a result, youth detention capacity will have increased by 33 per cent since the Palaszczuk Labor Government was elected in 2015.

While there is always more work to do, community safety will always underpin everything we do.

Mr Speaker, as I said earlier, the Palaszczuk Government is committed to investing in initiatives that continue to build a united, harmonious and inclusive Queensland.

Because Queensland's doesn't have multicultural communities.

It is a multicultural community.

2021 will spell a return to our much loved Celebrating Multicultural Queensland program with \$1.5 million for a record number of 211 events to be funded. COVID gazumped the program for 2020 but there will be some wonderful offerings for next year across the state, from Thargomindah to Townsville, and Rockhampton to Mt Isa.