




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 3 December 2020

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (11.46 pm): There is no denying that 2020 has been a year that has challenged Queensland communities both emotionally and economically. During these times, strong and stable government is so important in delivering economic stability. The Palaszczuk Labor government kept Queensland moving at a time when world economies were being shut down. We did that by prioritising workers and their families in our plan for economic recovery by creating jobs, backing small business, increasing investments in manufacturing and driving the largest infrastructure program in over a decade. We did that by keeping Queensland communities safe.

Our 2020-21 budget is focused on getting the economy moving sooner. As the member for Waterford, my focus is on getting our local economy moving. As the literal heartbeat of our community, the Logan Hospital has kept us healthy and kept us in jobs in these tough economic times. I am pleased to say that the Palaszczuk Labor government will invest \$53.6 million in the Logan Hospital this year and we are delivering an additional 206 beds and treatment spaces.

While 666 might be a superstitious number for some, for Logan it is the millions of dollars that the Palaszczuk government is investing in infrastructure and capital works in our region, supporting around 2,200 jobs. In the budget, education is a big winner for Waterford. We are delivering a new building and new learning spaces at Marsden State High School, the best school in the country, and new classrooms and automotive training facilities at Mabel Park State High School. As well as that, we are delivering a new Logan PCYC, a new clubhouse for the Waterford Rugby League Club and a new fire and rescue station at Loganlea. The budget includes funds for M1 upgrades for the region and a new shared pathway for the Loganlea Road Healthy Street Project. Labor governments understand that when we build we deliver frontline services and we create better jobs for locals.

As we continue to rebuild and recover, the Palaszczuk government will also put the safety of Queensland families first. To do that Queenslanders need to have confidence in their legal system. As the Attorney-General it will be my key priority to ensure that every Queenslander has access to justice. A robust legal system changes lives as it creates safe, fair and just societies. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General will spend \$1.358 billion on delivering quality frontline services and keeping the community safe.

As we continue to rebuild Queensland's economy, we know how important it is to put women at the forefront of our plans and actions. The Palaszczuk Labor government is investing \$152 million in Queensland women and support services for victims of domestic and family violence this financial year. Unfortunately, women have been disproportionately affected by this pandemic. They have endured the double impact of working in many of the continuing frontline jobs such as aged care, health care,

teaching, child care and cleaning, while also being concentrated in the industries most impacted by shutdowns such as retail and hospitality. The number of women who joined the jobless queue outnumbered the number of men.

Tragically, because of COVID, the issue of domestic violence is more relevant than ever. Almost one in 10 women in a relationship experienced domestic violence during the pandemic, with two-thirds of women saying the attacks started or became worse. Domestic and family violence has no place in Queensland and we will continue to work to eliminate it from our community.

Our government's \$152 million investment this year alone includes \$48.5 million to respond to domestic and family violence including counselling and crisis responses, court based support for victims and perpetrators, and specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support; \$34.3 million for women's shelters, mobile and centre based support services—and I am very proud to say that since 2015 seven new women's shelters have been funded in Queensland and that is the first in over 20 years; \$11.8 million for specialist sexual violence services; and \$8.4 million for women's health and wellbeing services.

Micah Projects does amazing work to provide services and opportunities in the community. When the budget was handed down on Tuesday, the CEO, Karyn Walsh, contacted my office and said—

The funding in the state budget to support services addressing domestic and sexual violence will be welcomed by services such as the Brisbane Domestic Violence Service to support more women and children to access safety, health and wellbeing.

The Speaker has reviewed and approved my budget speech for incorporation and, as such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

The speech read as follows—

At the same time that the community was forced to adapt to the realities of the pandemic, Departmental staff in the justice portfolio showed much resilience and implemented innovative measures to ensure business continuity through COVID-19, especially in relation to video technology. It is most appropriate then, that the Budget allocates \$9.33 million for the upgrading of audio-visual capacity in the Justice system.

\$2.25 million will be spent on the Government's Tackling Alcohol Fuelled Violence policy. This will enable inspections of licensed venues during peak trading periods in Safe Night Precincts and is part of a total sector spend of \$6.87 million.

Under the "Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence" policy, Queensland has recorded reductions in assaults, ambulance attendances and certain hospital admissions. These reductions represent a significant cost saving to the Queensland community.

Queensland's Blue Card system for adults working with children—the strongest in the country—will continue to evolve, with \$2.23 million allocated over the next two financial years to implement a process for the National Disability Insurance Scheme check and evaluating merging the Blue Card and NDIS screening systems. Another \$1.29 million has been provided for the next tranche of Blue Card System reforms.

The Office of the Public Guardian plays an important role in society protecting the rights, interests and wellbeing of adults with impaired decision-making capacity, and children and young people in the child protection system. This Office now includes Community Visitors in the Public Service Award and the 2020-21 budget provides an extra \$2.09 million to accommodate the change as well as cater for demand increases to support the ongoing quest to safeguard vulnerable adults and children.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General is responsible for a vast array of facilities around the State, including 16 courthouses with cultural heritage significance. Indeed, courthouses have been among the first significant public buildings constructed in many regional areas and, new or old, they need to be maintained. The 2020-21 Budget will see \$13.271 million allocated to the minor works program in courthouses.

In light of this, Queensland Law Society President Luke Murphy said the Society is encouraged by the additional funding to court infrastructure and timely additional support for victims and perpetrator programs of Domestic and Family Violence.

And I quote Mr Murphy:

"We look forward to working with the Attorney-General on these measures and the other items in the Queensland Law Society's 2020 State Election Call to Parties,"

The Budget is supporting the Department's continuing efforts to develop new efficiencies across its business operations.

Accordingly, \$1.136 million and five full-time equivalent positions have been allocated for the continuation of additional sitting days in the Childrens Court and the Childrens Court jurisdictional lead team, which leads work to improve court efficiency and data collection.

A total of \$599,000 and eight full-time equivalent positions have been funded to continue a reform program to address immediate demand pressures facing the coronial jurisdiction, and implementation of recommendations made by the Queensland Audit Office to improve the delivery of coronial services.

As always, statutory bodies have been catered for in the Budget.

Some of the highlights include \$303,000 and two full-time equivalent positions allocated to the Crime and Corruption Commission to continue intelligence operations and associated hearings program to combat serious and organised crime.

Legal Aid Queensland will provide \$510,000 over three years to the Environmental Defenders Office to continue the employment of two solicitors.

Administered National Legal Assistance Partnership funding of \$62.193 million is being provided for Legal Aid Queensland, and \$23.94 million to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services in 2020-21.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General continues to be involved in cross-sector initiatives to serve the community. New funding of \$377,000 over two years and 1.5 full-time equivalent positions, in conjunction with the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, will support examining options for Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme models.

Mr Speaker—the Palaszczuk Labor Government's 2020-21 Budget is a reflection of the wholehearted commitment to fair and equitable justice for all in Queensland.