



Speech By
Ali King

MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Health and Environment Committee, Report

 **Ms KING** (Pumicestone—ALP) (6.03 pm): It is such a privilege to follow the member for Oodgeroo, but I will come to that later. I rise to endorse the Health and Environment Committee's 2021-22 budget estimates report. This year's estimates report process was similar to last year's estimates in many ways—the same careful and thorough preparation from both the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs. We saw the same commitment from our chair, the member for Thuringowa, to providing a fair and balanced estimates with ample opportunity to explore the important issues covered in the portfolios, and again the opposition received 1.5 hours of additional time for its questions but again never managed to find anything particularly on point to ask about.

What was more striking than last year's estimates though—and unfortunately less edifying—was the conduct of visiting LNP members, not, I note, the opposition committee members who were, to their detriment, not provided with any opportunity to ask questions whatsoever. The downright contempt for the public servants who came before us, the bullying and verballing behaviour was not what the public would expect from a shadow minister but, sadly, precisely what we on this side of the House have come to expect from LNP members. This was particularly the case when it came to the member for Mudgeeraba, whose shark mask may possibly be the most outlandish prop ever to be produced in the history of estimates.

In terms of the appropriation bills, particular highlights in the 2021-22 budget are of course the ongoing investment in response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether it is resourcing the State Health Emergency Coordination Centre, increasing our intensive care capacity, standing up fever clinics or stepping up the vaccination rollout when the federal government failed so miserably, our very first priority has been and will always be keeping Queenslanders safe. Let us compare that to LNP members, whose policy approach to COVID-19 is summed up well on a billboard that remains on the side of Bribie Island Road in my electorate reminding motorists that the LNP called to open Queensland's borders 64 times.

I note the member for Oodgeroo's comments about losing control of the health system and that Queensland would have fared better under some mythical alternative. I am reminded of today's statistics of the 1,900 total COVID cases that Queensland has experienced in the course of this pandemic compared to the 20,000 current active cases in New South Wales across the border, and I

wonder under what mythical universe the member for Oodgeroo considers that Queensland is losing control of our health system. We have had 23 active cases compared to the 23,000 active cases seeded by an out-of-control outbreak allowed to escalate by the New South Wales government, and that attitude continued through estimates. There were no questions about the historic global pandemic we find ourselves in. There were no questions about the impact of the GP crisis in our communities. There were no questions about how that shortage of GPs impacts people's ability to get vaccinated in our outer metro and regional areas. As ever, LNP members went for the cheap shots and the exploitative stories. They blamed public servants; they pretended that COVID does not exist, and I again do not refer to opposition committee members given that they did not get to ask any questions.

As we saw today from the shadow minister, the LNP's approach was to give syrupy, insincere thanks to staff but punch down with attacks on the work of whole hospitals and health areas. The LNP demands more funding, yet when that funding is provided it says more funding is not the answer. Of course, its tragic record of sacking doctors, nurses and health workers leaves its pronouncements in this space distinctly hollow. It never planned a single hospital when in government, but it attacks and undermines our world-leading program of seven new satellite hospitals.

Unlike the LNP, I am absolutely delighted by our progress on those satellite hospitals, with the people of Bribie Island and Caboolture knowing that those new facilities will make a huge difference in providing more health care closer to home for our communities. Some \$105 million in this financial year sees this commitment well on the way to delivery. The Building Better Hospitals program sees an investment of \$283 million, including \$103 million towards the over \$400 million massive redevelopment of Caboolture Hospital, a new NICU, a new orthopaedic surgical unit and so very much more that is making Caboolture Hospital the very best hospital it can be.

Thank you to our parliamentary staff and secretariat. I particularly want to wish our committee secretary, Jacqui Dewar, well as she embarks on a period of leave. I commend the 2021-22 estimates report of the Health and Environment Committee to the House.