



Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 24 February 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

APPROPRIATION (2020-2021) BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Community Support and Services Committee, Report

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (12.07 pm): As Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, it is a privilege to represent these three particular groups of Queenslanders who make valuable and far-reaching contributions to our communities. Every Queenslander deserves the opportunity to thrive, with their human rights respected, meaning we have an unwavering responsibility to ensure all Queenslanders are empowered, are treated with respect and dignity and have equal access to pathways into employment and social, cultural and economic opportunities. Unfortunately, during my estimates hearing the opposition were more focused on whether I could recite hotline phone numbers than on hearing about the positive outcomes we have delivered. I am keen to talk about those today.

The Palaszczuk government's commitment to reframing the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders is just one of numerous initiatives that I have made a priority for this year. Early this month, the Premier and I proudly announced the co-chairs and members of the Treaty Advancement Committee. The committee will be co-chaired by Dr Jackie Huggins AM and Mick Gooda, who will be joined by members Professor Michael Lavarch AO, Dr Josephine Bourne and Sallyanne Atkinson AO. They will work to provide expert advice to government on the implementation of recommendations to continue our path to treaty. We want to do this diligently and with an emphasis on making sure all Queenslanders are part of Queensland's treaty process.

By engaging in truth telling and reconciling with the past, we are committed to getting this right, to ensuring we have the right processes and supports in place to facilitate this important journey that we need to take together. I believe that the Treaty Advancement Committee will hold its first meeting next week.

Queensland's treaty process coincides with our signing of the national Closing the Gap agreement last year, committing to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards 16 new targets aimed at improving life outcomes. These targets were developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representatives, yet the opposition has expressed concern that they will lack meaningful outcomes. I look forward to bipartisan cooperation on Closing the Gap and also on treaty from the opposition.

I want to mention a couple of our key achievements as a government in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander space. We have maintained a dedicated Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. In terms of supporting achievement of Closing the Gap, we have made the highest investment of any state or territory of \$9.3 million to support capacity and capability building of community controlled organisations to improve outcomes. We legally recognised traditional Torres Strait Islander child-rearing practices through the Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa (Torres Strait Islander Traditional Child Rearing Practice) Act 2020 introduced into this parliament by the member for Cook, the first Torres Strait Islander to be elected to any Australian parliament. As we know, that was passed and I can report to the House that that is progressing well and we should be able to appoint the commissioner in the middle of this year.

With regard to disability services, the LNP does not have a good record in this space. It cut critical services for people living with disability. Under the former LNP government, we saw \$642 million cut from the disability services budget—again, completely unacceptable. This was on top of the \$368 million cut from NGO funding in the 2012-13 budget, devastating community service providers right across Queensland. We saw the number of people with a disability on the register of need skyrocket from 5,900 to more than 17,000, and it gets worse. With no plan to outsource accommodation support and respite services, more than 600 positions were cut from disability services. At that time Queensland was the only state not to have signed up to an NDIS trial site, citing a lack of money.

Around 78,000 Queenslanders have active NDIS plans. The scheme creates thousands of jobs; it boosts our economy. Work is still underway on the NDIS. We still have a long way to go, but we are working with our federal colleagues, we are working with other states, we are working with our stakeholders and we are working with the families as we move through. Another area that was focused on during estimates was the Forensic Disability Service. I recently visited the FDS and I am confident that FDS clients are treated respectfully and supported as appropriate, taking into account the wellbeing and care of the individual clients and those working with them at the service. I had conversations with all but one of the clients in the FDS. The one whom I could not talk to was actually out at TAFE, rebuilding his future and getting ready for his transition. I am very happy with the FDS. I want to thank the committee and thank my department for its work during estimates.