



Speech By
Jason Hunt

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report

 **Mr HUNT** (Caloundra—ALP) (6.48 pm): I rise to speak in support of the proposed expenditure following the estimates hearing of 14 December of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee. Thankfully, the Attorney-General was able to outline the ongoing reform program that this government has tirelessly worked on in response to the groundbreaking *Not now, not ever* report. The Attorney-General was able to inform the hearing of the high-risk teams that work with police in domestic violence services to ensure that all the collected information in this space is collated and shared in accordance with the recommendations. There is still work to be done. As much as we would like to think that this problem can be eliminated entirely, the tragic events of this week demonstrate that there will always be a need to seek and develop further safeguards.

This government will legislate to criminalise coercive control. Perpetrators who marginalise their partners, isolate them from friends and loved ones, control and completely dominate their financial independence are now on notice. Loved ones are invariably able to identify this insidious behaviour, which all too often coalesces into violence and tragedy. We know that a staggering number of Australian women will experience physical or sexual violence at the hands of a current or former partner—one in six by most reckonings.

Similarly, we are also aware that pandemics and natural disasters see a spike in domestic and family violence, and COVID-19 has been no exception. In what has now become the Premier's trademark, she acted early and decisively and committed \$7.5 million for family and domestic violence services that were experiencing increased demand. The Attorney-General was further able to advise that the Queensland Family and Child Commission found that Queensland's blue card system was one of the strongest checks in the country for those seeking to work with children. Queensland's no-card no-start laws from August of last year make our system stronger and safer. The capacity now exists for people to apply for a blue card online and prior to formal engagement with an employer.

It was a genuine pleasure to hear from the member for Morayfield and the minister about the largest investment in policing in three decades. This equates to a tangible increase of over 2,000 police officers, or 150 extra police in each region, and \$300 million for capital works which, I am happy to say, will also deliver a brand new police station in Caloundra South, which is welcome news for the electorate. The budget will also roll out the new mobile police beats, a virtual police station on wheels to bolster the all-important police presence that goes towards crime prevention—policing out in the community where they are needed most.

In corrective services, a portfolio near and dear to me as a former custodial officer, \$241 million in Capricornia doubles the capacity of that centre. With a corresponding increase in staff, the safety of those officers will be enhanced. Perhaps more significantly, the \$650 million for the Southern Queensland Correctional Centre will provide a welcome relief as part of a proper and serious solution around prisoner numbers and an enormous boost to regional employment and a stimulus to that local economy. Even more importantly, this centre will be publicly owned which is not, as characterised by some, wasteful spending but rather a genuine commitment to the safety of our custodial correctional officers. Publicly run jails are immeasurably safer than private ones and the fact that this is not recognised by all members of this House is alarming.

We have heard from the LNP that bringing prisons back into public hands, costing \$100 million over four years, is wasteful spending and totally unnecessary. Spending on the safety of our custodial officers is never wasteful spending. The therapeutic nature of some of these units will represent a genuine commitment not only to the wellbeing of the prisoner demographic but also more significantly to the officers dealing with those prisoners. It would be a shame if those who have no experience in correctional centres denigrate this capacity. For our CCOs dealing with prisoners with mild and severe cognitive and behavioural impairments, this is a serious matter. While our CCOs must deal with prisoners who autocannibalise, it would be instructive for them to hear of wasteful spending used in relation to their future. Spending on the safety of custodial officers is never wasteful and I am delighted that the minister shares this belief with me. It was reassuring to hear him promote these measures in the committee hearing. I commend the 2020-21 estimates from the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee to the House.