



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR COOPER

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill


Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (12.27 pm): I too rise to support the committee report. I would like to begin by thanking the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence; the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services; and the departmental officers for their cooperation in providing information to the committee throughout the process. I would also like to acknowledge the member for Toohey, who was a wonderful chair, and the members of the committee for their valuable contributions. I would also like to thank the committee secretariat and other parliamentary service staff for their assistance on the day.

I was thrilled when I was informed that I would be on the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee. Observing and contributing to how the criminal justice system operates and functions has really been quite a large part of my career and a big part of my life now for over 20 years. Importantly to this debate, I have worked alongside hundreds of people working within the criminal justice system, including: frontline responders; the QPS Child Protection Investigation Unit; victim liaison officers with the ODP; youth workers in BYDC; and magistrates who preside over critical judgements. I share this to illustrate the weight with which I entered the estimates inquiry process. I know that preparation for estimates is a process that our public servants also consider seriously; accordingly, I would like to acknowledge them today.

That was, unfortunately, in stark contrast to those opposite on the day who, quite frankly, to my surprise came across as quite disorganised, unprepared and chaotic. Is it any wonder that they were so distracted when we see the events that are occurring this week—with mass exodus and increasing investigation. Having strong oversight and scrutiny is so important to this process, so it was very disappointing. I have to say at one point I looked up and thought we had gained a member of the government to ask some questions, but it was in fact the member for Burdekin. I do not know which line of questioning he was going down but I thank him for his questions.

I would like to acknowledge the work of our fire and emergency services portfolio and corrective services portfolio. I particularly want to acknowledge the new QCS commissioner, Paul Stewart, who I think did a phenomenal job in estimates on the day. It was his first estimates I believe. He did a wonderful job. In the time I have, I would like to speak to some of the investment highlights in the specific areas of police, justice and women.

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (2.00 pm), continuing: Of note at the hearings, we heard of the ongoing impact that COVID is having on the relevant departments. The Queensland courts have achieved a real feat in redesigning their service delivery model to operate during and despite lockdowns. Our recent investment of \$7.4 million to expand and upgrade existing audiovisual capacity in the justice system, including videoconferencing in custody appearances and the permitting of various documents to be signed and witnessed electronically via video link, has allowed the legal system to respond with strength to announced lockdowns. A further \$13 million over four years will strengthen access to justice for Queenslanders, including an additional \$7 million for QCAT and \$5 million for coronial services. This is in addition to the \$1.4 million allocated this year to support the coronial investigation and inquest into the tragic deaths of Hannah Clarke and her three children. We heard of the impending establishment of a second coronial registrar within the Coroners Court of Queensland.

The government continues to prioritise funding to victims of crime. This budget will see an additional \$4 million over four years for Victim Assist Queensland, an organisation that I am proud to declare I have been employed with, to continue to provide timely and targeted financial assistance to victims of crime and to their families. I want to give a shout-out to the current team at Victim Assist Queensland—to Julie Webber, the acting director, to the many assessors, the case managers, the link-up officers, the regional team. They do phenomenal work and I know that this additional funding will help ease their workforce pressures.

We have invested more than any previous Queensland government to strengthen justice responses to domestic and family violence. During the pandemic service providers experienced an increase in demand and an immediate funding boost of \$7.5 million was announced in response to that. The Queensland Police Service also remains dedicated to enhancing its responses to people experiencing domestic and family violence. A national first new online domestic violence reporting tool, specialist police domestic and family violence coordinators across the state, high-risk teams and improved access to frontline technology with mobile QLITE devices now enabled with police protection notices to be issued are some of the proactive policing measures that we were updated on during estimates.

The Palaszczuk government's strong commitment to advancing gender equality and respect for women and girls across the state continues. Our current Queensland Women's Strategy has helped us make significant progress towards gender equality. We heard from the minister during estimates that work has begun on the new strategy which will be informed through comprehensive engagement with government agencies, industries in Queensland, women and girls. The need for a modern and responsive policing and justice system continues to be a priority for Queenslanders and a priority for this government. I commend the Palaszczuk government, the ministers, the staff, the departments, the government's budget and the report to the House.