



Speech By
Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

APPROPRIATION (2020-2021) BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (6.32 pm): I rise today to make my contribution to the estimates debate. As the deputy chair of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, I firstly would like to thank the committee secretariat for all of the work they do in relation to the committee. I also feel at this point it is my duty to put on the record that from where I sit as the deputy chair of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee the estimates process is a very constrained process, highly controlled by the Labor chairs, where every effort is made by the government to avoid in-depth probing and ultimately to avoid scrutiny—the very thing that the estimates process is meant to afford the people of Queensland. As a first-term MP I thought it really was quite disgraceful and disappointing to witness this.

I agree with the member for Maroochydore: reform is needed because the estimates process does not do what it is meant to do. Labor members use the process to ask Dorothy Dixers and then avoid the opposition's questions altogether. The Labor chairs even actively shield the ministers from the probing questions—probing questions that rightly should be asked, probing questions that taxpayers expect us to ask in order to understand how the government is spending their hard-earned taxpayer money.

During my contribution today I would also like to hone in on something that I sought answers to during the estimates process, something which is particularly important to my community, and that is the importance of our local police beat, particularly at Elanora. In 2005 prior to the Elanora Police Beat opening—and it is important that this House understands the history—there was headline after headline of youth related issues in the media. The Palmy Army and Southside Soldiers were common phrases amongst locals. Disturbances were regularly occurring, particularly at night-time, in the community. People were assaulted outside family restaurants and many police incidents were seen at the McDonald's outside The Pines in Elanora. I do not want to see a return to those days.

Our local police beat at Elanora has been instrumental in curbing this crime over longer than a decade. In the Currumbin electorate officers at the neighbourhood police beat have an amazing and now longstanding relationship with school principals and school communities including Elanora State High School and the Palm Beach Currumbin State High School. The police beat is also involved in raising awareness of domestic violence issues. The success of the program cannot be underestimated in my view and has been demonstrated by the high community acceptance of the neighbourhood police beat in Elanora. The primary reason for their success is that individual officers take responsibility for

their area consistently and over a long period of time. Ultimately, the community trust those officers, and this has led over a long period of time to a reduction in crime. It is this partnership with key stakeholders within the community, built by these officers over a long period of time, that makes the neighbourhood police beat at Elanora so successful.

It is for this reason that honourable members can imagine my concern when my questioning during the estimates process revealed that Labor may indeed scrap the Elanora Police Beat. They may scrap it in favour of a mobile police unit, a mobile police unit which will have a rotation of officers rostered on—not even dedicated to the Currumbin electorate, completely defeating the purpose of a neighbourhood police beat within the community. I will continue to fight for this service to be retained within the Currumbin electorate.

During the state election campaign the opposition campaigned for more police. We fought for additional police officers for the Palm Beach Police Station to protect the northern part of the Currumbin community as well as a \$1 million investment to combat hooning. When it comes to providing extra funding to tackle crime, the LNP gets it.

The LNP members of the committee rightly have concerns about the Palaszczuk Labor government's ability, based on its track record, to deliver upon its main election commitment: to increase police personnel over the next five years. Given Labor's ambitious commitment, the opposition spent considerable time during the hearing trying to get a better understanding of how the Queensland Police Service intends to deliver on this commitment, and the minister's response came up well short. The government could not guarantee that we in Currumbin would not lose officers if they scrapped the police beat. This is not good enough for my electorate, and I will continue to fight for this invaluable service for Currumbin.