



Speech By
Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (2.03 pm): Yet again estimates has revealed a Palaszczuk Labor government budget that fails Queenslanders, fails to deliver for the Currumbin electorate and fails to provide local families with hope of a better future. As the deputy chair of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, let me take this House through some of the failures LNP opposition members and shadow ministers have uncovered as part of the estimates process this year.

Estimates revealed the expenditure of over half a million dollars of public money to poll Queensland residents on the Labor government's response to COVID-19 and its border policies. The government tried to justify this expenditure on polling as communication and sentiment testing, but that is complete rubbish. The chair of the CCC was asked during estimates whether the use of public money to conduct polling would be a matter the CCC would consider investigating if it was used for a purpose other than an appropriate public purpose. The chair of the CCC responded that that is not currently under investigation but that the chair of the CCC does not necessarily need a complaint in order to open an investigation.

Here is what I think: it is an inappropriate use of public money and instead of this government spending taxpayer money on polling to get itself re-elected it should have spent that money supporting the community that is being asked to bear the burden of these border closures, the community that has been left devastated by these border closures without any targeted financial support.

Government members interjected.

Mrs GERBER: The estimates process has also established that the Labor government still refuses to reinstate breach of bail as an offence for juvenile offenders.

Government members interjected.

Mrs GERBER: Rather than introducing breach of bail as an offence, the Labor government legislated to allow monitoring devices on juvenile offenders.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Pause the clock. Ministers on my right will cease their interjections or they will be warned.

Mrs GERBER: Guess how many of these monitoring devices have been issued to juvenile offenders?

Mr Stevens: Zero!

Mrs GERBER: I take the interjection from the member for Mermaid Beach; the answer is zero. That is correct—zero. Queenslanders do not have faith that this Palaszczuk Labor government can deliver a safe Queensland.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! No more interjections, please, or I will start warning both sides.

Mrs GERBER: In my electorate of Currumbin I have been inundated over the past year with messages from frustrated locals affected by juvenile crime—locals who have had their homes broken into and property destroyed. These young offenders know the law, but they also know that the courts cannot hold them. They are taking advantage of decisions made by a Labor government weak on crime. My community is angry and this behaviour cannot be allowed to continue.

Just yesterday I was contacted by Kendall, who lives in the suburb of Currumbin. She has been broken into several times. She has had her car stolen. Kendall is not alone in this experience. Several of her neighbours have also been the victims of youth crime. To add insult to injury, the criminals—some as young as 14—posted videos of themselves in Kendall's stolen car driving at extreme speeds through our local streets. Kendall reports that these young hoons have previously been arrested, but they are already back on the streets continuing their rampage. Our pleas have fallen on deaf ears and our families and friends continue to be targeted by juvenile offenders because instead of reinstating breach of bail as an offence public money has been spent on a failed policy of monitoring devices.

The estimates process also saw serious concerns raised that this state Labor government is incapable of managing prisoner numbers. This gross inability is harmful and is resulting in overcrowding and assaults in our prisons. It is not good enough that Queensland correctional facilities are currently at 125.8 per cent capacity. During estimates the commissioner said that they do not want anyone sleeping on the floor, yet with a capacity of 125.8 per cent there are reports of inmates sleeping on mattresses on the floor. This paints a clear picture that this state Labor government is not fit to keep Queenslanders safe. It is weak on crime and, just as disturbing, this government fails to be transparent.

During estimates the commissioner advised the committee that several measures have been introduced, including OC spray, load-bearing vests and body worn video. When asked on how many occasions the OC spray was used, my LNP colleagues and I learnt the answer was unknown. Currently, this data is not kept. The commissioner revealed that the government was only now in the process of establishing mechanisms to record OC spray usage. This is not good enough, especially considering that OC spray is a category R weapon. These mechanisms should have been implemented simultaneous to the introduction of the spray.

Continuing the state Labor government's failure to be transparent, the commissioner was also unable to provide details on what assaults on correctional staff remain unresolved or not finalised. Currumbin constituents and indeed Queenslanders across the state deserve so much more from this state Labor government.