



Speech By  
**Hon. Leanne Linard**

**MEMBER FOR NUDGEЕ**

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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. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (12.17 pm): I want to thank the members of the Community Support and Services Committee for their report and work on estimates day to support the process, as well as the parliamentary staff involved. I want to particularly thank the committee chair, the member for Mansfield, for her professional chairing of the hearing. She did an absolutely fantastic job on the day and should be commended. I have chaired five estimates hearings, but this was my first appearance as a minister. While those opposite invariably criticise these hearings, their commentary tends to ignore the farcical role that they play in undermining such hearings.

As I mentioned, I have presided over many hearings and at a number of those hearings members of the opposition have yelled at and badgered ministers and public servants, asked political 'gotcha' questions rather than those focused on meaningful accountability and walked out on hearings, all in the hope of a headline. It was refreshing therefore to experience the more respectful and professional tone brought by the member for Whitsunday, who led the opposition at my hearing. This place should be a place for robust debate and direct questioning. I welcome such scrutiny—it is a vital part of a working democracy—but it does not need to be aggressive or abusive. It does little but erode the public's confidence in us all and we can do it differently.

Our government is investing significantly across my portfolio areas of child safety and youth justice and continuing to invest in multicultural affairs. We have committed a record \$1.7 billion to keep our communities safe, to help our vulnerable children and families, and to celebrate our vibrant multicultural state. This includes \$166 million to implement reforms around early intervention with families; \$86 million across five years for the running of the new \$150 million 32-bed West Moreton Youth Detention Centre; and continuing the trial family-led decision-making to help families identify and address their child's needs to stop reoffending.

These are big financial investments and meaningful numbers, but the true story of my department is told by the people who work in it: those who give tirelessly to help our most vulnerable—our child safety officers, youth justice workers and multicultural affairs team and the staff who support them. Their work is difficult and challenging and becoming increasingly so. COVID has placed additional pressures on families, and the increase in substance abuse, particularly ice, is affecting our child safety and youth justice system. Yet in spite of this my portfolio continues to rise to the challenge. The number of 24-hour

priority investigations started on time is higher than 94 per cent, despite investigation numbers rising by more than 10 per cent, the highest since records began in 2008. Our reforms and investment have allowed the child safety system to respond flexibly and meet this demand, but the impact will be long lasting and many of these families will need support for many years.

Our reforms also mean there are 1,500 fewer children admitted to a child protection order than predicted by the 2013 Carmody report, despite the number of children in care increasing by 2.7 per cent in the last financial year. I would like to acknowledge those putting up their hands to become foster and kinship carers. Across the year almost 200 new families have opened their hearts to children who need a home. Thank you!

In youth justice our priority is community safety. As Bob Atkinson aptly said in his 2018 report on youth justice, public safety is paramount and community confidence essential. These principles underpin our work. We are continuing our \$332 million investment in our co-responder teams, with police and youth justice working together to tackle youth crime by preventing it. Our Transition 2 Success program goes from strength to strength helping at-risk young people gain skills and training to continue their education or get a job. These and other reforms initiated in 2019 are making a difference, with the number of offenders charged with offences in Queensland decreasing by 23 per cent in the last financial year. But when young people continue to offend and where they jeopardise community safety they are held to account. We have invested \$150 million in the 32-bed West Moreton Youth Detention Centre and \$5.7 million for the On Country programs in Mount Isa, Cairns and Townsville. We are also investing more than \$15 million in our five-point plan, taking tougher action on bail, working with police to target high-risk offenders and providing \$2 million across 10 community based crime action committees to develop local solutions.

From youth justice to multicultural affairs, with so many events cancelled last year because of COVID, we will be back bigger and better than ever this year with a record 211 events, sharing more than \$1.5 million across the state. I commend the report to the House.