



Speech By
Hon. Leanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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 ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts) (11.56 am): I rise to contribute to the debate on the estimates committee report of the Community Support and Services Committee. In doing so, I acknowledge the hard work of all members of the committee, in particular the chair, the member for Mansfield, for her outstanding oversight of the events of the day; the member for Cook; the member for Nicklin; and all of those opposite and from the crossbench who also contributed to the important work of that committee; the secretariat staff; and witnesses from the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy who contributed to the estimates process last December. In particular I acknowledge all of the staff from my new department, the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, and those from Arts Queensland who absolutely stepped up to the mark and provided some outstanding information and service during that time.

The Palaszczuk government acted swiftly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our government has always remained committed to supporting local people, communities and jobs throughout the pandemic. It is thanks to the hard work of Queenslanders that our state is now on the path to economic recovery.

During the height of the pandemic in March last year the Palaszczuk government announced a \$24.7 million package to assist vulnerable Queenslanders to have a safe place to live. The Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy is a frontline human service. Our government takes a person centred approach to housing need, providing a suite of products to assist Queenslanders to access sustainable housing.

As noted in the committee report, our government is delivering improved housing outcomes for Queenslanders through our ambitious Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027. In addition, our \$1.6 billion Housing Construction Jobs Program will deliver over 5,500 social housing and affordable homes. I am advised that it is the largest investment in social housing since World War II. These programs are not only increasing social housing stock; they are also supporting the state's building and construction industry, which employs 240,000 people directly and indirectly. These jobs are vital for Queensland's economic recovery.

The opposition's performance during estimates and their statement of reservation shows that they have no alternative plan except to continue with their denigrating rhetoric about social housing. We know from recent reports on the Gold Coast that the LNP would rather see some of the most vulnerable in our community living on the street instead of being provided with housing support.

Mr MANDER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find those comments offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Minister, the member has taken personal offence and I ask that you withdraw.

Ms ENOCH: I withdraw. We know also that the member for Everton cannot escape his legacy as the former minister. He and the LNP will be forever remembered for their cuts to the social housing construction program, the wholesale giveaway of publicly owned assets and hundreds of Queenslanders removed from the social housing register if they did not respond to letters in time.

Mr MANDER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The minister has clearly misled the House with the regard to the sale of houses. I will be writing to the Speaker to inform him of that and for him to take matters accordingly.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Everton.

Ms ENOCH: Very clearly, the member for Everton finds his legacy somewhat disturbing. The Palaszczuk government recognises that households on the social housing register often have complex needs and are among the most vulnerable people in our communities. This is why we allocated \$139 million in the 2020-21 budget to provide housing and support for Queenslanders.

In relation to the pandemic, we know that there still are many people who need support. That is why our latest budget includes \$1.7 million for Community Connect workers in neighbourhood and community centres in areas most impacted by COVID-19. The pandemic has also highlighted the need for a strong digital economy. It is forecast that there will be an additional 10,000 digital professionals in our state by 2024. We are investing \$8 million over four years to deliver the digital professional workforce plan to harness the opportunities this will deliver for our state as our economy recovers. Despite the huge opportunities the digital economy presents for Queensland, I did not receive one question from those opposite about that part of my portfolio during the estimates hearing—yet another disappointment from the LNP.

Another important platform for our economic recovery is the arts, which each year injects \$8.5 billion into the state's economy and supports more than 92,000 Queensland jobs. The arts and cultural sector was significantly impacted by COVID-19 and we have supported it through our two-year Arts and Cultural Recovery Package. I am very proud of that work indeed. We are so fortunate that Queensland's positive health response has led to the easing of restrictions, with theatres open to full houses, live music venues welcoming more patrons and the return of outdoor festivals. I thank the committee for its report, and I support it.