



Speech By
Peter Russo
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (6.27 pm): I rise in the House to support the proposed expenditure as detailed in the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 for the following areas of the committee's responsibility: justice and Attorney-General, women, the prevention of domestic and family violence, police, corrective services, and fire and emergency services. Consideration of the budget during estimates allows for public examination of the responsible ministers and the chief executive officers of agencies within the areas of responsibility I just outlined. The committee's recommendation is that the proposed expenditure for the committee's areas of responsibility as detailed in the appropriation bill 2020 be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the ministers and their staff for their attendance and for providing detailed answers to questions from the committee during the estimates hearing. During the estimates hearing held on 14 December 2020 for the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, non-government questioning time ran for 3.52 hours and government questioning time ran for 2.13 hours, with the total time for the estimates hearing being 6.54 hours.

I would now like to speak of some of the important aspects of the estimates hearing as highlighted by the ministers. The Minister for Police informed the committee of the government's investment in policing. The budget represents a watershed moment in the state's history. The Palaszczuk government's investment in policing is the largest in three decades. More than \$600 million will be invested over five years to deliver an extra 2,025 police personnel. It is worth noting that the opposition committed to delivering less than half that number of police personnel.

The committee was also told of the vital role police have played in the front line of Queensland's response to COVID-19. Police on the borders and in hotel quarantine and airports have played a critical role in helping stop the spread of the virus. Queenslanders can be grateful for the dedication and professionalism of police during the pandemic, and the government's significant investment in the Queensland Police Service will only enhance its capabilities. The LNP's lack of commitment to policing was brutally exposed during the election campaign and they now have nowhere to hide on this matter. The Palaszczuk government is making landmark investments in policing and corrective services. It is about community safety. Considering the times in which we live, community safety has never been more paramount.

The Minister for Women informed the committee about the action the government has taken on legislating coercive control in the domestic violence scenario. The minister advised the committee that there is ongoing legislative reform that the government has embarked on in response to the *Not now, not ever* report on the important issues of sharing better information between agencies in relation to domestic violence cases and there has been a lot of work done across agencies. The minister went on to advise the committee that there are now high-risk assessment teams in place where domestic violence services work with police and are co-located to make sure that information is being shared.

Of course, as we know, there is always more work that can be done in this space. That is why as a government we have an election commitment to legislate and criminalise coercive control. The legislation to deal with this dangerous behaviour by perpetrators—to criminalise behaviour such as isolating women from family and friends and restricting access to money—is underway. However, this legislative change must go hand in hand with educating frontline responders and the community about recognising the signs when it comes to perpetrators and coercive control behaviour. Family and friends of victims will often be the first to recognise this type of behaviour and, in order for frontline services to be able deal with the issues, education is paramount.

The year 2020 proved to be challenging for Queenslanders, women and families. Under the COVID restrictions, the issue of domestic and family violence was more relevant than ever. The United Nations has noted that domestic violence is a shadow pandemic and it continues to persist across all of society.