



Speech By
Robert Skelton

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Record of Proceedings, 24 February 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Community Support and Services Committee, Report

 **Mr SKELTON** (Nicklin—ALP) (12.37 pm): I rise in support of the report of the Community Support and Services Committee. This committee has a very broad area of responsibility that encompasses the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy and the Arts; the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships; and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs. Our responsibility is to consider the policy to be given effect by legislation and the application of fundamental legislative principles and matters arising out of the Human Rights Act 2019, and to examine subordinate legislation and its lawfulness.

It is now my privilege to provide highlights of the great work and commitment of our state's Palaszczuk government and those three government departments. I will first refer to the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy and the Arts. Some key issues that are being addressed by that department—and these are only brief as it is a very detailed report—include supporting and funding neighbourhood community centres with funding of \$1.5 million to 12 organisations for Community Connect workers and \$1.7 million for 15 neighbourhood and care army connect workers throughout the network of 125 neighbourhood and community centres. This is important for my area of Nicklin. I give a shout-out to the Nambour Community Centre among other NGOs in that electorate.

Social housing is reflected in the Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027 action plan. The government's reform of rental laws will provide better protection for tenants and owners and improve stability in the market. Other programs are supporting vulnerable people, including young people, families and adults, to access and sustain safe and secure housing through investing in specialist homelessness services and delivering Partnering for Impact to reduce homelessness in Queensland and broaden partnerships with the homelessness sector to achieve better outcomes for our vulnerable Queenslanders. Anyone who visits the hinterland will realise that Nambour is the end of the rail line, and we end up with a lot of homeless people. These plans are important to us. This, combined with reforms to the regulation of manufactured homes and retirement villages and an increase to the accessibility of the Rental Tenancy Authority, is testament to the government's commitment to providing safe and affordable housing for all Queenslanders.

In the arts sector, the government is delivering the Creative Together 2020-2030 road map, with significant funding to QPAC, the QCC, the Queensland Library, the Queensland Museum and the Queensland Art Gallery. A lot of this funding will be delivered to the regions and our thriving creative community in Nicklin.

The department is supporting seniors with investment in programs that raise awareness of elder abuse, reduce isolation through the Seniors Enquiry Line and provide financial concessions in utilities, rates and cards for goods and services.

Members of our community with different needs are supported by the government working with the federal and other state governments to enact legislation that screens workers in the sector. We are increasing funding for transport services and co-funding with the federal government for better accessibility to services, especially disability services, in our remote regions.

In partnership with First Nation people, the department is working with communities and recognising cultural practices, for example those set out in the *Meriba Omasker Kaziw Kazipa* (Torres Strait Islander Traditional Child Rearing Practice) Act 2020; co-funding with the federal government on Closing the Gap initiatives; supporting the path to reconciliation through treaty; and empowering Indigenous communities with employment through community housing projects while facilitating small business enterprises.

Youth justice reform is a key issue for the community and government. The department has committed to a new facility in Wacol. It is supporting on-country programs in Mount Isa, Townsville and Cairns. It is extending the Conditional Bail Program, which provides support to young people while they are released on bail and encourages families in their decision-making and identifying problems.

Institutional child abuse survivors are assisted by the department administering direct monetary payments, providing access to counselling and psychological care, and providing assistance in seeking a personal response from the institution responsible for the abuse.

I have provided a snapshot only of all the departments' programs and initiatives. These departments handle some of society's biggest issues which are not easily solved. It is encouraging as a new member to see a bipartisan and collaborative approach taken. I commend the report to the House.

(Time expired)