



Speech By  
**Robert Skelton**

**MEMBER FOR NICKLIN**

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

**Appropriation Bill**

**Community Support and Services Committee, Report**

 **Mr SKELTON** (Nicklin—ALP) (3.11 pm): I rise to speak in support of the budget estimates for 2021-22 as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2021. The opposition and the crossbench have commented on the time allocation in estimates and how my chair acted in the committee, but I want to say that I think they are grossly wrong.

I welcome the report by the Community Support and Services Committee, of which I am a member. I acknowledge the work of the chair, my colleagues on the committee, the secretariat, Hansard, the departments and the ministers. I must also thank the Parliamentary Service for supporting the estimates process in difficult circumstances.

Before I give some highlights, I am going to concur again with others on this side of the House over my disappointment in the behaviour of some senior members of the opposition who were granted leave to ask questions. It is regrettable that these few have such a lack of respect for the process, the ministers and the hardworking public servants of the three relevant departments. I paraphrase US President Theodore Roosevelt, and this is for a lot of people: to see a problem without offering a solution is called whining. I implore those opposition members to reflect on that.

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**Mr SKELTON:** Yes, you are doing a great job. Through the chair, I take that interjection. As the member for Nicklin, I am pleased to be part of a Palaszczuk Labor government that is committed to the state's largest investment in social housing since World War II. This is evident in my electorate in Nambour, as work is nearing completion on 16 social housing units in the heart of town. Eight will be platinum and eight will be gold, and they are designed for our most vulnerable Queenslanders.

There is \$1.9 billion—that is billion with a 'b' for those opposite—that will be invested over the next four years to increase the state's supply of social housing and upgrade existing stock. This will be supported by the establishment of a \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund. This is a long-term fund that will drive new supply to support current and future housing needs and it will be administered by the hardworking personnel at the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy and Queensland Treasury. This will bring the total investment to \$2.9 billion—the largest concentrated investment in social housing in our state's history.

With our great state being the envy of the country and the gold standard in dealing with COVID-19 outbreaks, we have experienced a huge influx of new residents eager to experience our relaxed lifestyle and exemplary health services, but it is putting stress on our capacity to ensure everyone has a place to call home. Our investment will see an additional 7,400 homes built over the next four years, easing stress on the system and providing homes for potentially tens of thousands of people. I also note that locally there is additional funding for IFYS, which operate youth at risk housing; for Refocus, which operate the Gunyaih of Wellness in Currie Street; and for our Nambour Community Centre.

To quote Gandhi, a society is judged by the way we treat our most vulnerable. I congratulate the Palaszczuk Labor government for their ambitious, forward-thinking plans. I would like to thank the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. I note the additional \$300 million funding provided to support the Palaszczuk Labor government's Path to Treaty Fund, with returns used to support Path to Treaty actions and the government's response to the Treaty Advancement Committee report expected later this year. This is an important step as we walk with our First Nations communities on the Path to Treaty and meaningful reconciliation. In addition, there is support for our seniors and different ability Queenslanders.

I note the Palaszczuk Labor government is providing an extra \$76 million to the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs to hire an extra 154 additional frontline child safety workers, which will reduce case load and boost services to provide better outcomes for Queensland's most vulnerable children and families. This is in addition to the extra \$77 million provided by the state government to deal with serious recidivist offenders and the continuation of broader support programs.

It is pleasing to see ABC news reports quoting QPS Assistant Commissioner Scanlon stating that the new youth justice laws brought in by the Palaszczuk Labor government after the last election are having their intended effect—that is, preventing serious repeat offenders from being on the street and doing harm to the community. This is a plan put forward by a government that is committed to getting things done for the people of Queensland—something that those opposite would not know anything about. I recommend that the expenditure as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2021 be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment for the committee's area of responsibility. As such, I commend this bill to the House.