



Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 24 February 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

APPROPRIATION (2020-2021) BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (11.31 am): In my reply to the 2020-21 budget estimates report from the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee and as stated in my statement of reservation, I would like to again draw the attention of the House to the need for a review of the estimates hearings and committee process, which I have done through a number of channels now for just on three years. Around the world improvements to committee processes and sessional orders have been sought and implemented. We are currently seeing calls for the reform of question time in federal parliament. Examples of these improvements in other jurisdictions include further limiting the time for ministerial statements and government question time allocations and hosting non-parliamentary chairs, simultaneous hearings and regular review periods of the process.

During this estimates I was advised that a review occurred in 2012. Given that planning schemes are developed every 10 years, vital processes such as those that scrutinise government, including spending, should also be reviewed each decade, if not earlier. As I have written to the Premier, the CLA and in last year's statement of reservation, there have been several suggestions for improvements from current and previous MPs, and during this sittings we have heard some heated comments on members' concerns. We should have no anger or fear with regard to working to become more efficient. Efforts that save time and cost, such as all questions to be taken on notice, including from visiting members granted leave to attend hearings, should be considered. Hearings could then be dedicated to follow-up questions. As a result, resources would be targeted. Compare this to the current situation, where departments prepare for questions that are never asked. Given the backlog of issues that frustrate our communities which are yet to be dealt with, I have no doubt that the resources saved could be deployed elsewhere, including urgently resolving our housing crisis. There are many other priorities.

Queenslanders are increasingly disillusioned by processes that are not in line with their expectations and no longer fit for purpose. An independent review of all committee processes, including the Business Committee, is beneficial to the process and the people of Queensland and it should be a priority in this term. That the current system is inadequate is not a reflection on our committee's report, nor the departmental staff, ministers and all involved in preparing, compiling and attending the hearings. The extraordinarily short space of time allocated between budget and estimates weeks just before Christmas is testimony to the commitment and dedication of so many, and I thank and congratulate all who worked under this duress. I am sure that any reform which better utilises valuable resources to deliver better outcomes would be welcome by all.

In addition, I would like to express our gratitude to the front liners who are impacted by appropriations and the decisions made surrounding them. You do an incredible job, and the questions we ask during estimates are part of ensuring that you have what you need to keep our communities safe through prevention, detection, mitigation and legislation that works. This includes queries I had concerning the Fraser Island fire, dangerous behaviours on our roads, the technologies that are needed to assist in the apprehension of offenders, and accommodations for our domestic violence families.

Queensland has travelled a journey through the COVID pandemic that has been difficult and expensive. With the costs of the pandemic being worn by all Queenslanders now and into the future, efforts to streamline our systems are needed as part of that recovery. In closing, I thank our chair, fellow committee members, our secretariat and the committees who gave leave for me to appear. The work you do is difficult and deeply appreciated. May this year's budget and estimates process see the improvements sought by so many Queenslanders and their members of parliament.