



Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (2.15 pm): The COVID disrupted estimates hearings of 2021 again highlighted improvements that could be implemented within our committee process. I think there are also improvements that could be made in this chamber from what I have just seen. Previous requests have included a change to the way that questions can be asked, increased time allocation—I know there has been a lot of toing and froing, but I will go into that later—for opposition and crossbench members, the setting of time constraints for questions and answers and providing a segment for non-budget related questions. Research on the way that unicameral parliaments in other jurisdictions, such as New Zealand, Scotland and Canada, operate compared with Queensland was conducted by two of our parliamentary interns and I table the research and practical solutions papers.

Tabled paper: Report by Genavieve Beaumont, titled 'Report on the context of parliamentary committee reforms in New Zealand, Scotland and Quebec and research findings [1314](#).

Tabled paper: Document, dated 5 May 2020, titled 'Research Findings: Table 1: Gaps, Opportunities and Recommendations' regarding the committee system [1315](#).

Tabled paper: Document, undated, titled 'Panel notes—Current issues with the parliamentary committee system' [1316](#).

Detailed research shows what we can tweak to have truly effective representation that affords all members equal opportunity to represent their constituents and hold the government to account on their policy and monetary decisions. This includes ensuring that committees can make amendments to legislation, access additional resourcing and layperson expertise and be provided additional allocated chamber time. In addition, bipartisanship, which would allow non-government members to chair committees, either proportionally as New Zealand does or on a rotation of chair between government and non-government members with no casting vote.

Parliament and estimates could benefit by a review of how time is allocated in this chamber. Recommendations utilised globally include limiting ministerial statements and Dorothy Dixers and providing extra opportunities in the first session every day for non-government members to contribute. Previous requests to the Premier and the Committee of the Legislative Assembly to review procedures have been unsuccessful.

In my statement of reservation I have outlined further recommendations that cover issues raised over the last three years which would ensure this House and the estimates process is comprehensive and fair. I table those recommendations.

Tabled paper: Document by the member for Noosa, Ms Sandy Bolton MP, regarding recommendations relating to the estimates hearing process [1317](#).

In relation to the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee budget 2021-22, domestic and family violence and its impact on victims and communities is a key focus, especially as Noosa is underresourced for emergency housing for those fleeing domestic violence. With competing needs across the state, prioritising emergency and affordable housing must be dominant in our efforts. We must also ensure that funding packages to refuges and organisations is increased to deliver targeted services to the children of victims. Even though how funding is spent is determined by the organisation—which was a response from the minister—there has been no increase above CPI over many years to accommodate children in the provision of support services. This is concerning in efforts to break the intergenerational cycles. I welcome the Attorney-General's generous offer to work closely with me on this to provide what is sought by these families and organisations.

With the limited time allocation there were a number of questions that could not be asked. While everyone is saying, 'You have got plenty of time over there', as a member of the crossbench in many of the sessions we had five minutes. That was squeezed between three parties and one Independent, which are so diverse. Sometimes two questions are divvied up between four. That is not an easy feat. One question I could not fit in is about the provision of housing for perpetrators, where appropriate, to allow victims and their children to stay in the family home instead of facing the trauma of relocating to housing, which in my community does not exist. I also wanted to ask about funding for the Electoral Commission of Queensland to ensure the privacy of voter information and the misleading practices used by political parties to obtain voter information. We need this addressed.

Likewise, a review of electoral boundaries is long overdue and needs to be considered in next year's budget to ensure that there is consistency of representation and resourcing for all Queenslanders. Regarding much needed additional police resourcing, including at Teewah Beach, with increasing domestic violence being experienced my community looks forward to being included in the promised extra personnel. I thank Minister Ryan for that. Bushfire resources, training for SES personnel and volunteers, and dealing with youth crime have shown up as deficits. Current and future budgets must be adapted to provide the increases needed and, yes, we have to make sure that we have pilots for the LAT, the large air tanker.

In conclusion, I thank our chair, fellow members of the committee, and the hardworking and tireless secretariat. I thank all of the ministers, their staff, departmental officers and everyone else. Their work is very much appreciated in COVID times. I send my deep gratitude to all workers on the front line. They are just incredible in all ways.