



Speech By  
**Dale Last**

**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 August 2022


## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

### **APPROPRIATION BILL**

#### **Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

#### **Appropriation Bill**

#### **Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.15 pm): I rise to speak to the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee's report into the 2022-23 budget estimates. I want to put on the record at the outset my appreciation of the respective commissioners for their candour and willingness to answer the questions that we asked at the hearing. There is a very good reason why I went to the commissioners—because they answer the questions and they provide the information.

There are two words from the estimates hearing that illustrate perfectly the claims made by this government in the crucial areas of police, fire, emergency services and corrective services. Those two words are 'incredibly inaccurate'. Those were the words of the Police Commissioner when questioned on the numbers used by this government in the budget documents, and I must agree. Back in 2020, this government gave a commitment that by 2025 police numbers would be boosted by 2,025 staff, including 1,450 sworn officers. In the estimates hearing following that announcement, the LNP questioned how that would be achieved. What we learnt during that estimates process was that those plans are in tatters. The attrition rate was revealed at 40 per cent higher than predicted and far higher than we have seen in at least eight years, resulting in an increase in sworn police officers of just 143 for the last 12 months.

We heard terms like approved strength, actual strength, headcount and, get this, minimum obligatory human resource information. All Queenslanders want to know is: what is the operational policing number on any given day? How many police officers are available on any given day to go out there and respond to a call for service? I do not think that is too much to ask. Instead, what we got from over there is more smoke and more 'minimum obligatory human resource information' terms to cover up what is clearly a major issue with their recruitment targets.

Let me talk about domestic and family violence. We know about the issue of domestic and family violence in this state. The estimates process revealed that over half of Queensland's domestic and family violence specialty officers are yet to complete the specialist course. Frankly, that is not good enough. During the review of the corrective services portfolio it was revealed that not one of the nine additional positions budgeted for will be a custodial corrections officer. The 2020 riot at the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre and the 2021 riot at the Capricornia Correctional Centre left taxpayers with a bill for almost \$2 million worth of damage. As we did in the statement of reservation, the LNP calls on the government to seek full restitution for the damage from those convicted in court.

The paid staff and volunteers who form part of QFES's response to incidents are victims of this government's repeated practice of receiving key reports and shelving them. The fact is that this government has held the Darby review into the SES for over two years and has held the KPMG review into the structure of QFES for almost nine months. Despite our repeated calls for those documents to be released, what have we seen? Nothing. What is even more concerning is that the minister was either unable or unwilling to advise when we could expect any form of response and also hinted that the implementation of the KPMG review itself may be the subject of a review—so now we are looking at a review of a review. Is it any wonder that our QFES employees are demanding leadership from this government?

Given the importance of the role of volunteers in assisting Queenslanders, the LNP questioned the commissioner about ensuring volunteers have the appropriate training to undertake emergency response tasking. It is deeply concerning that the commissioner said tasking of volunteers to undertake duties they are not qualified for could potentially occur. The LNP will continue to hold this government to account to ensure that all volunteers receive the training they require for the tasks they are assigned.

When it comes to staffing levels for QFES, the estimates hearing revealed that the government's 2020 election commitment of 357 new firefighters by 2025 is now also seriously in doubt. Given that just over \$19 million was spent on overtime payments last year just to keep our stations open, it is clear that this commitment will not be honoured.

For the record, the LNP was relieved to hear that the commissioner advised that new helmets for firefighters which address the communications issue is progressing. It is blatantly clear, however, that when it comes to departments that Queenslanders rely on for safety, this government is big on talk and low on action.

*(Time expired)*