



Speech By
Jonty Bush

MEMBER FOR COOPER

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (2.20 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee estimates report. Before I do, as a former public servant, I have to pick up on some of the comments that were made yesterday by the member for Kawana where he stated that public servants were coming in to the estimates process and refusing to answer questions. His comment about wanting to return to the good old days where members of parliament could continue to question and harangue public servants until, I think the quote was, he got the answer he wanted was, for me, just so incredibly chilling. If the member for Kawana cannot see the issue in that particular statement and cannot see the issue in haranguing and harassing public servants who, I might add, are required by legislation to be fulsome and transparent in a style that generates the answer that he wants, then he really needs to spend some time in deep reflection. Queensland's public servants take their role in estimates preparation incredibly seriously. To suggest that they are being dismissive of the estimates process is incredibly uninformed.

There are a number of issues that the residents in my electorate really care about—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): Pause the clock! Member for Nanango and member for Hervey Bay, please stop quarrelling.

Ms BUSH: There are a number of issues that people in my electorate would really care about that came up in the estimates process. It was really wonderful to see the progress being made, for example, by the Public Trustee's office under new leadership, and particularly I would like to commend the current PT, Samay Zhouand, for the work he is doing. The Public Trustee has been on an incredible reform journey and it is really good to see that their customers' first agenda has already delivered significant benefits for clients. A number of projects from their strategy have already been successfully delivered, including imbedding La Trobe University's best practice decision-making model across frontline services of the organisation. They are the first and only public trustee to do this.

I was really pleased also to hear about the additional financial support being provided to Legal Aid Queensland. Anyone who has experience in Queensland's legal system knows the value that LAQ brings, ensuring that all Queenslanders, regardless of income, background and ability, have access to good legal representation. It is important that every Queenslanders can access justice, regardless of

their financial situation, and it is wonderful to see the significant increase in funding of \$76.8 million over four years. As part of that budget, Legal Aid Queensland is receiving additional funding of \$6.1 million ongoing to support the government's response to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce report.

The Attorney-General provided an update on some transformative work currently being undertaken by the office of births, deaths and marriages which is exploring arrangements that will allow trans and gender diverse people to have their gender identity accurately reflected and affirmed on their birth certificate. There have now been three roundtables on this really important issue, and the office continues to work with the LGBTIQ community and stakeholders to craft the preferred solutions. We heard during the estimates process that there is now an exposure draft of a bill being circulated with a bill likely to be introduced this year.

On a final note, I want to highlight an area of continued concern to me and many of my colleagues which is the fundamental right to access safe abortion services. I know this is something that my predecessor, Kate Jones, was really proud to give her voice to here in this chamber around the decriminalising of termination of pregnancy and giving women control over their health. I am really proud of our government's record in supporting women's reproductive choices. In this year's budget, we have allocated almost \$1 million to Children by Choice to provide domestic violence counselling because we know that controlling a woman's reproductive rights is often a form of domestic and family violence. Many of us have watched in horror, and continue to watch, at what is happening over in the States with decisions being overturned. It is a stark reminder that progressive laws exist only for as long as we have progressive governments.

Here in Queensland, the Leader of the Opposition has been asked if the LNP would review Queensland's abortion laws were they to win government. He has refused to answer this, but he has suggested that we should look at how he conducted himself in 2018. Regrettably, in 2018 the Leader of the Opposition voted for abortion to remain in the Criminal Code. He did not speak on the bill to even share his decision-making. The opposition will, I predict, do everything they can in the lead-up to the next state election to keep this issue off the agenda, and I would urge Queenslanders to remember this environment. Our women and girls cannot afford to forget what is at stake here.

In the final seconds I have left, I want to thank my committee colleagues, those who attended as visitors—I think it was all very collegial on the day—and to thank the parliamentary staff for their support as always and, of course, to thank public servants for their attendance. I commend the report to the House.