



Speech By
Peter Russo
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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 RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (2.00 pm): On 3 August 2022 the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee met to examine the budget for the 2022-23 financial year. The budget estimates examination of the ministers, along with their chief executive officers of agencies, is an essential process of government and allows for the public examination of a committee's portfolio area of responsibility. At our public hearing on 3 August we heard from the Hon. Shannon Fentiman MP, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence and the Hon. Mark Ryan, Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services.

The committee's recommendation is that the proposed expenditure for the committee's areas of responsibility as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2022 be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment. On behalf of the committee I thank the ministers, their staff and officials from relevant departments for their assistance and providing detailed answers to questions from the committee during the estimates hearings. I also thank the secretariat staff, Hansard staff, parliamentary broadcast staff and all other parliamentary staff for their assistance.

On behalf of the committee I would like to wish Deputy Commissioner Smith a well-deserved retirement and thank him for his service over the years. Sadly, I would like to reflect on the loss of State Emergency Service volunteer Merryl Dray, who lost her life in the line of duty. I would like to express the sympathies of both myself and the committee to her family and friends. We are grateful for Merryl's selfless dedication.

As highlighted by the ministers, important aspects were examined at this year's estimates hearing. The Attorney-General spoke about the reforms being delivered in her portfolio, with \$246 million being invested over five years to modernise Queensland courts. The Attorney-General recognised that advances in technology have been rapid and it is vital for the courts to keep pace with advances being made in this area. Queenslanders must have access to justice, and this access means investing in the people who are providing services on the front line. Legal Aid Queensland will receive funding to increase essential legal services. The growing demand for the services of the Queensland Human Rights Commission will be addressed with increased funding to allow the commission to continue its valuable work. The Queensland Law Reform Commission has been asked to recommend a framework for a decriminalised sex work industry in Queensland to improve health, human rights and legal protection for workers.

The Palaszczuk government has committed to criminalising coercive control and shining a light on this repulsive behaviour, which is linked to the risk of domestic abuse and can lead to homicide in some cases. The budget also includes an investment of \$363 million to respond to all recommendations of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. The Palaszczuk government is making serious inroads towards improving support for victims and their families in our multicultural communities through building capacity and making it easier for victim survivors to get the help they need.

The committee also met with Mark Ryan, the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. The committee was assured that the Palaszczuk government will always support the critical work of the Queensland Police Service and that they are doing this with more personnel, new facilities, the latest resources and stronger laws. This year for the first time ever the budget for the Queensland Police Service exceeds \$3 billion. In Queensland we have a record historic investment in better services. The Palaszczuk government will deliver the biggest boost in police numbers in 30 years. This financial year approved police officer strength is expected to increase under the Palaszczuk government to over 1,200 positions, and there are more to come. This record \$3 billion police budget supports the rollout of new state-of-the-art police equipment over five years, including: the newest integrated load-bearing ballistic vests, an additional 5,000 QLITE tablet devices, an additional 4,500 new body worn cameras and an additional 250 new police vehicles.

Since the Palaszczuk government took office there have been an additional 3,600 beds built across the correctional system. The record budget will further boost safety through the deployment of additional body worn cameras. I commend the report to the House.