



Speech By
Corrine McMillan

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 23 August 2023

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Community Support and Services Committee, Report

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (2.28 pm): It was my great honour to serve as chair of the Community Support and Services Committee as we considered the Appropriation Bill 2023 for the committee's portfolio responsibilities, which include communities, the arts, treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships, housing, seniors, disability services and child safety. Estimates is a necessary process that allows all members of parliament, in particular, non-government members, to question members of the executive and senior public servants on the array of positive programs and initiatives being delivered by this Palaszczuk government. I felt embarrassed for opposition members of the committee as, again, they were denied the opportunity to ask questions by their self-assured colleagues, namely, the member for Everton whose conduct continues to reflect behaviour more suited to a football field. This comes at a time when the spotlight is cast on the behaviour of male leaders, including politicians, as our communities continue to grapple with gender-based violence.

The member for Surfers Paradise and I share significant history, dating back to when he was the minister for education. That is why I was disappointed when he chose to pursue a particular line of questioning of the Minister for Treaty. The minister was very clear about her motivations for, on occasion, meeting with First Nations staff to ascertain familial connections and raise awareness of any potential conflict of interest. The member for Surfers Paradise sought to take normal cultural practices and somehow make them sound inappropriate. The member for Surfers Paradise would have seen this arrangement when visiting schools as the minister for education. He knows, as I do, that it is quite common for administrators, including principals of schools, to meet with particular groups of students or teachers to address concerns that are relevant to that particular group. The line of questioning demonstrated a lack of cultural awareness and was disrespectful.

A more constructive line of questioning, which may yield the LNP more support, may have been: how can the opposition work with the government to improve one measure that may better the lives of First Nations peoples in Queensland? This could include supporting First Nations children's school attendance across every electorate in Queensland or establishing structures to mentor every Aboriginal young person across every electorate in Queensland. Of course, this approach would require a genuine will to make change, but if minority groups such as Aboriginal people succeed then it would challenge the class structures that the LNP work so hard to preserve. There are some issues that are above politics, one of which is the plight of First Nations peoples.

I thank the member for Whitsunday for her contribution to the estimates process. However, I was similarly disappointed that that member used estimates to report the alleged risk of harm to a young person. Estimates is not the forum to do this. As adults and leaders in our communities, every member of this House has a legislative responsibility to immediately report harm, alleged harm or the risk of harm to a young person through the appropriate channels.

I acknowledge the professionalism of the deputy chair, the member for Burnett. It is an honour to work with him. I am fortunate to lead an outstanding committee whose members work collegiately, diligently, deliberately and ethically, and we demonstrated that through every member of our committee's support for truth and treaty. Transparency and accountability are the hallmark of good government and I am proud to be a member of the Palaszczuk government.

Estimates provides members with opportunities to explore areas of government spending, and the facts speak for themselves. I have been advised that the committee sat for seven hours and 30 minutes, of which three hours and 40 minutes were allocated to non-government questions compared to two hours and 49 minutes of questioning by government members. Further evidence that ample scrutiny of the government's budget was afforded to the opposition was that, of the 155 questions that were asked, only 48 questions were asked by government members and 107 were asked by non-government members.

As a long-term employee with the Public Service, I am well aware of the rigour that exists regarding the expenditure of public money, as there should be. As elected officials, we should strive every day to ensure that public money is expended for the benefit of all Queenslanders. I take this opportunity to thank the three ministers I serve. I acknowledge their great leadership and the wonderful opportunity that we have to work with them. I thank our committee secretariat and the Parliamentary Service staff for their support throughout the estimates process. I commend report No. 33 of the Community Support and Services Committee to the 57th Parliament.