



Speech By
Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Record of Proceedings, 23 August 2023


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Community Support and Services Committee, Report

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (3.25 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the committee report in relation to child safety. The minister confirmed quite freely in the estimates hearing what we all feared here in the opposition: that, when calculating the average case load per child safety officer, they are using funded positions and not filled positions. It is important to get this on the record. Here are the child safety officer vacancies we were told about: 19 are missing in Brisbane and Moreton Bay; 38 in Far North Queensland; 34 in North Queensland; 15 in South-East Queensland; 58 in the south-west region; and 44 in the Sunshine Coast and central region. In total, that is 208 child safety officer positions that are not currently filled. Using the minister's figures, that means 3,278 cases are currently being managed by empty chairs.

That is 3,278 children at risk of significant harm. That is 3,278 children who are now relying on less trained, overworked staff to get them out if they are in imminent danger. That is 3,278 children who need ongoing contact with a consistent officer who can track their progress. It is almost beyond belief that we are at this point after eight years of Labor. An empty position cannot make a home visit. An empty position cannot ask a child how they are. An empty position cannot see the weight loss or the suspicious marks on a child's arm and raise the alarm. Let me make it crystal clear: an empty position cannot keep a child safe.

Instead, we have a Labor government which love nothing more than flashy announcements, but they are failing to deliver for our children at risk. Queensland kids are not safe with this government. This government are more interested in protecting their own image. They are more interested in the optics. They are more interested in the flashy announcements than keeping our children safe. There is no clearer evidence of that than the fact that we have empty positions. We have 208 empty chairs.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): Sorry to interrupt, member for Currumbin. The time for the debate has now expired.