



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

Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (2.04 pm): I, too, rise to talk to the budget estimates report of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee. Turning first to the Attorney-General's portfolios, astonishingly, the estimates hearing revealed that only 28 of the 81 recommendations from the *Keeping Queensland's children more than safe* report have been completed. That is a complete failure of this state Labor government. This unsettling pattern extends to the implementation of the Child Safe Standards. When asked if Queensland had implemented Child Safe Standards as recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse it was confirmed that the government had not. When it comes to keeping Queensland children more than safe, this Labor government has clearly failed. It has been given a road map of the changes needed, yet it has not prioritised this critical reform. Why? It is because this is a government that is too caught up in its own chaos and crisis to actually deliver what it says it will. It is too caught up in its own chaos and crisis to put the safety of our children first.

I turn now to QFES and the examination of the Fire and Emergency Services portfolio. It came to light during the estimates hearing that should an electric vehicle catch fire tomorrow on our highway, firefighters would not actually have the necessary equipment to suppress the thermal runaway in a timely manner. An amount of 60,000 litres of water is needed to address an electric vehicle fire. Overseas some firefighting organisations were literally picking up vehicles and putting them in massive tanks of water that were on the side of the highway. Other measures used to control an electric fire were huge blankets that they put over the electric vehicle. It was then left to burn for a couple of days. I asked: if an electric vehicle were to catch fire on the Bruce Highway, what equipment do we have to contain that? We do not have those big fire blankets; we do not have 60,000 litres of water sitting beside the Bruce Highway ready to dump the car in. How would we deal with thermal run-off from an electric car fire on the Bruce Highway? Scarily, it was revealed at estimates that this state Labor government is not prepared.

Next I want to address a very unsettling matter in relation to the police minister's response during the estimates hearing. Concerningly, during our estimates committee hearing, the police minister revealed that he had been informed about private communications between QPS and an opposition MP. The minister then attempted to weaponise that information to sledge the opposition. I asked the

minister to explain to the committee how he knew that police contacted another MP and why the minister knows about that operational detail, particularly considering the police minister's office was the office under investigation. The communication between the police minister and the MP was not public and it is concerning that the police minister was privy to that information and was allowed to weaponise it at our committee hearing.

There were more startling revelations in relation to the police portfolio. In the middle of a youth crime crisis estimates revealed the true state of our police numbers in Queensland. Despite months of prior denials it was confirmed at the estimates hearing that there was a reduction of 202 police officers in Queensland during the previous financial year. Should attrition continue at the current pace, this government would need to deliver 2,300 more officers to fulfil the Premier's promise of more police by 2024.

It is clear that morale among our police is at an all-time low. While the number of police boots on the ground is declining, the cohort of hardcore serious repeat offenders is increasing. It is now at 20 per cent. We have fewer police on the ground—the thin blue line has never been thinner—and the cohort of hardcore repeat youth offenders is increasing. Two years ago it was at 10 per cent, last year it was at 17 per cent and this year at the estimates hearing it was revealed it is now at 20 per cent. That is 20 per cent of youths who are hardcore repeat offenders committing almost 50 per cent of all the crimes, and it is continuing to go up. It has doubled under this Palaszczuk Labor government and police feel absolutely powerless to turn that tide. Why? It is because over the last eight years this Labor government have delivered weak laws, they have watered down our laws and police now no longer have the powers to turn the tide on youth crime.

It is no wonder the attrition rate in our police force is so high. The government's promise of more police is in complete tatters. This government is lurching from crisis to crisis and is failing to protect Queenslanders.

(Time expired)