



Speech By
Robert Skelton

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Record of Proceedings, 23 August 2023


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Community Support and Services Committee, Report

 **Mr SKELTON** (Nicklin—ALP) (3.20 pm): I rise to speak to the Community Support and Services Committee and our work in this year's budget estimates. Our committee's areas of portfolio responsibility are: treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships, communities and the arts; housing; and child safety, seniors and disability services. On 16 June 2023, the Appropriation Bill and the estimates for the committee's areas of responsibility were referred to the committee for review. By examining and reporting on the proposed expenditures contained in the Appropriation Bill, the committee assists the parliament in its scrutiny of the government's proposed expenditure. With three-quarters of questions coming from opposition and crossbench participants, the estimates process is fair and equitable, representing the Palaszczuk government's commitment to open and transparent governance.

In the treaty, communities and the arts portfolio, there is \$44.1 million to continue construction of the new performing arts venue at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, benefiting Queensland artists and audiences. There is \$12.2 million to continue the upgrade and construction program for neighbourhood centres and other key social infrastructure. We are also continuing to provide assistance to ease cost-of-living pressures for families. We are providing a \$4.3 million boost to food relief services, including doubling our investment in emergency relief services and providing additional funding for organisations like Foodbank Queensland and OzHarvest. These are very important measures in these times.

We will also be delivering \$2.7 million over two years to expand the School Breakfast Program, meaning more of our kids will be learning on a full stomach. We are continuing to boost neighbourhood centres, with a record \$51.8 million to boost the 128 state funded centres, as well as \$39 million for new builds and redevelopments.

The Palaszczuk government is using every lever at our disposal in housing to put a roof over people's heads. We have announced an additional \$1.1 billion investment as part of our state budget—bringing our total investment to \$5 billion—to deliver more social and affordable housing. This is the single largest concentrated investment in Queensland's history and will help us to deliver 13,500 homes. We have delivered 858 social homes across the state in this financial year. We have delivered on average 10 new social homes each week since coming to government in 2015.

We know that building new homes anywhere takes time and that there are Queenslanders who need roofs over their heads now. That is why we are applying out-of-the-box solutions, such as: purchasing or leasing vacant aged-care homes for transitional or long-term social housing within short time frames; modular homes; tiny homes; and buying up or saving NRAS homes that are exiting the scheme after the federal colleagues of those opposite wrecked it almost a decade ago. Far from, for example, the member for South Brisbane's quite frankly bizarre insistence that the Housing Investment Fund should only purchase new homes, we are spending these public funds efficiently and effectively.

In child safety, disability and seniors, cost of living is one of the most important considerations in this portfolio. There is \$1.8 billion in cost-of-living relief, meaning that around 600,000 vulnerable households, including elderly and disabled households, will be receiving more than \$1,000 off their power bills this financial year. In conjunction with seniors legal and support services, we have funded the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit, making sure we shine the light on elder abuse in our community.

We are looking to fund more delegated authorities which will give more First Nations communities self-determination when it comes to child protection. We also recently announced a review into residential care. This will specifically look at children under 12, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and children with a disability who reside in residential care.

I would like to thank the ministers, the departments and their representatives for their continuing commitment to our state. I also thank the committee secretariat, Hansard, my committee chair and all the members on our committee who operate in a very collegial manner and examine everything that comes before us. I concur with the remarks from the chair and other government members about how disappointed I was by the behaviour of some of the visiting members and their lack of contrition since then.

The results of this year's estimates demonstrate the Palaszczuk Labor government's staunch commitment to more housing, stronger and healthier communities, and a vibrant arts economy. Only under a Labor government does public money get spent on the public good. Unlike those opposite, we will always act in the best interests of all Queenslanders. I commend this report to the House.

(Time expired)