



Speech By  
**Sandy Bolton**

**MEMBER FOR NOOSA**

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Record of Proceedings, 23 August 2023


## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

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#### **Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

#### **Appropriation Bill**

#### **Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report**

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (2.13 pm): I rise to respond to the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee report No. 53 on budget estimates for 2023-24, which covers both the questions sent on notice prior and the public hearing, which operated in an open and responsive manner. I thank our chair and all in attendance for this. Questions covered a broad range of budget related matters that were relevant for Noosa and broader Queensland, as we have already heard.

The Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence answered questions on: the funding of the response to the recommendations of the *Hear her voice* report; the ability of QCAT to resolve disputes and review decisions; and what can be done when courts are not using legislative tools to address repeat offenders. Clarity was given around increased funding for domestic, family and sexual violence and the continued rollout of the DFV high-risk teams monitoring high-risk perpetrators.

The Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services, Commissioner Carroll, and the Inspector-General Emergency Management responded to our questions on safety and policing. After the fires of 2020, it was reassuring to hear that the new Australian standards for fire warnings have been implemented, as was the fact that 67 of the 112 recommendations from the Igem report have been adopted—with the balance underway and being reported on every six months on their website.

With policing and crime being the greatest issue across Queensland, the importance of obtaining facts has never been greater, whether in relation to what the increases are, pursuit policies and how adequate police numbers are calculated through to what processes are in place for hospitals should patients display behaviours that could be dangerous to family and the community. This is especially relevant in light of anecdotal reports that many tragedies being experienced have links to people with a previous history of mental health issues.

As there is no time to speak about all of the questions and issues that were covered, I have posted online the questions taken on notice and asked during the LASC hearing as well as the 55 questions sent as questions on notice to the other committees. As standing orders 181(e) and 182(1) do not accommodate this, they went to the relevant ministers. Processes that allow greater efficiency

and transparency should be supported via such methods. There are additional barriers to efficiencies in our committee and estimates systems, as I have raised in previous years. Member for Caloundra, I am definitely not whining!

Without rehashing the committee hearing in its entirety, I make a couple of points. Regardless of the statistics provided during the debate in this chamber, the structure of committee hearings is inequitable for crossbenchers, who represent 50 per cent of Queensland's land mass. With some portfolio sessions lasting only an hour, after introductory speeches the opposition allocation was 27 minutes, with the crossbench receiving 17 per cent of that. This could mean one or maybe two questions to share between three parties and an Independent. Reports from these hearings again indicate that a visiting crossbencher being afforded a question is not consistent.

The system as it stands works to frustrate, making easy access to information harder than it needs to be. As I pointed out in my statement of reservation, over 10 years ago the parliament passed the Right to Information Act 2009. This envisaged an approach to government information that was pro disclosure—with information pushed out to Queenslanders rather than pulled via RTI requests or requests sent through and then rejected because they do not comply with standing orders—in order to facilitate informed debate and decisions. That vision has not been delivered in full; however, it should provide a guide for reviewing the estimates and the committee system to better inform our communities. I await the determinations from the CLA on our requests, which are now in the fifth year.

Another issue is the budget papers themselves. These fail to present the state's finances in a way that is understandable in laymen's terms for Queenslanders to scrutinise. Remember, this is taxpayers' money. If we could tackle these issues as well as the requested review, we would take meaningful steps in improving democratic processes in Queensland.

Seven committees holding hearings over seven days covering every portfolio of government is a mammoth effort, with hundreds of staff attending from departments and preparations for weeks prior. I thank all departmental staff, ministers, committee chairs, members and secretariats, including our own. I give a special thank you to our chair, the member for Toohey, who provided above the 17 per cent allocation for our questions. I appreciate that. Most of all, I offer gratitude to our frontliners, who do an amazing job every day. Thank you.