



Speech By  
**Tim Nicholls**

**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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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**

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (12.43 pm): I wish to speak in respect of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee report. I want to first of all say that the parts of the committee hearing that I was involved in were largely civil and courteous. They went reasonably smoothly, and I acknowledge the chair. Either he is getting slack or I am getting slack. Nonetheless, it all went pretty smoothly and we did manage to cover some, but not all, areas. I will say that the time period given for the investigation of statutory units under the Attorney-General and Justice portfolio is very short. In total there is 40 minutes. When you think of all the statutory organisations, it is a very short time to get through them all. I wish to highlight some of the matters that the estimates committee report and the investigation produced.

One of the matters we focused on was blue cards. In the estimates committee, the Attorney confirmed that just 28 of the 81 recommendations of the *Keeping Queensland's children more than safe* report had been completed. Members will recall that that report was completed following the tragic circumstances regarding Tiahleigh Palmer. The Attorney had a lot of excuses as to why those recommendations had not been implemented—that some were in progress or even that it was the responsibility of other departments for the rollout. The overwhelming circumstance was that the department had taken its eye off the ball and the minister had taken her eye off the ball. Nothing changes the fact that, after almost six years and multiple ministers, the government has failed to carry out almost two-thirds of critical recommendations to keep children safe.

This was confirmed by Mr Luke Twyford, the Queensland Family and Child Commissioner, who confirmed that, despite their ongoing advocacy, Queensland has not implemented the Child Safe Standards. We are not saying that the government can stop every crime from being committed, but this Labor government should be doing everything it can to put in safeguards, and clearly it is not doing so. Labor is clearly unable to implement these recommendations. I asked Mr Twyford—

In your legislative review of the Family and Child Commission Act ... in March this year, you are still advocating for the implementation of Child Safe Standards. Does this mean that those standards have not yet been implemented ... ?

The answer was—

Yes, I think that is correct.

Those standards give effect to the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse from March 2014. His most recent report in March this year indicated that those standards have still not been put in place.

On the Carne matter, the costs incurred by the CCC for the parliamentary release of the results of the corruption inquiry into Labor mate Peter Carne have continued to increase. It is now over \$571,000. High Court expenses are now over \$360,000 and there is another \$100,000 in additional costs. Queenslanders are truly paying the price for this Attorney-General's reappointment of Labor mate Peter Carne to the position of Public Trustee. This is the same Public Trustee who, it was revealed in estimates in 2021, allegedly spent tens of thousands of taxpayers' money on education expenses and overseas travel inappropriately, who was paid almost a year's salary of more than \$350,000 while suspended, and who failed to answer a show cause notice, resigning on the last day of an extended show cause period. That is the penalty paid for the lack of integrity for this Labor government.

Mr Carne has not been charged but the report into the operations of the Public Trustee Office and of his time as the Public Trustee is obviously important. I asked questions of the chair of the CCC, Mr Barbour, in relation to releasing that report, and he responded directly by saying—

I could not agree more that the importance of the commission being able to publicly report on matters, notwithstanding whether formal findings have been made of corrupt conduct, is essential to community assurance that the commission is working effectively and also in terms of educative processes for the rest of the public sector.

It is an issue so important that this parliament itself and the Commonwealth parliament have intervened in the High Court to get this report done. There is little evidence that the Labor government are taking this significant issue seriously. They seem to simply be relying on the outcome of the High Court and not contemplating what might happen if there is an adverse finding.

In relation to the Public Trustee, a series of questions also revealed the ongoing chaos and crisis in the Palaszczuk Labor government when it comes to its inability to monitor the effectiveness of the Public Trustee Office. The fees and charges review for the Public Trustee either has not been completed a year after delivery of the report to the government or has produced news that is so bad that the government does not want to deal with it. It has again extended the moratorium on fee increases for another 12 months. Is there a secret plan to hike up fees?

There is still no clarity around the operation of the Public Trustee Advisory and Monitoring Board. There are issues around the regulation of gaming. The \$100 million fine, which has been treated as a bonus by this government, is not going into harm minimisation or gambling regulation. There is still much chaos and crisis surrounding this Labor government's administration of justice in this state.