



Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 23 August 2023


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (2.18 pm): I rise in relation to the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee's 2023-24 budget estimates report. As I outlined for the committee, the government is continuing to make substantial investments in, and reforms to, the criminal justice system. We are implementing the recommendations of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce to drive systemic change and improve experiences of women and girls in the criminal justice system. We have appointed the state's inaugural First Nations Justice Officer to lead the development of strategies to reduce the over-representation of First Nations people in our criminal justice system. This is the first office of its kind in this state and possibly in the nation. Further, we have established the Criminal Justice Innovation Office to deliver innovative projects to reduce demand on the criminal justice system.

The budget is making investments to continue the rollout of specialist domestic and family violence courts and new courts in Brisbane and Cairns, and it is continuing to invest in specialist courts and programs such as the Murri Court and Court Link. These important programs focus on the needs of vulnerable people in the justice system and address the underlying causes of offending. Through the budget the Queensland government is providing the funding for initiatives to improve safety of women and their children, support victims of crime and strengthen access to the criminal justice system.

Crucially, we are investing in improved support services for survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence. The budget provides \$58.3 million over four years and \$20.7 million per annum ongoing to meet immediate demands and address gaps in domestic, family and sexual violence service provision. This is in addition to the five-year \$225 million funding package to implement recommendations of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce report 2. The funding will expand the Sexual Assault Response Team to two new locations and court upgrades in 81 locations to make it easier for victim-survivors to give evidence in court. It includes an additional \$12.6 million over five years and \$2.6 million per annum ongoing to provide support for victim-survivors through their criminal justice journey.

I want to make it very clear that our government recognises the devastating and long-lasting impact on victims of violent crime. Increased funding of \$9 million has been allocated across four years to support victims of violent crime and to better meet the needs of property crime victims where violence or a threat of violence has occurred. As I mentioned earlier today, we are also moving ahead with establishing a victims commissioner. I advised the committee at our parliamentary estimates hearing that we would shortly appoint an interim victims commissioner and this morning I updated the House that it is the intention for the interim victims commissioner to commence next month. They will commence with important work while the legislative framework is put in place. As announced this morning, the required recruitment process is already underway and I look forward to saying more on this soon.

Turning now to our courts, I am pleased to say that we are supporting the sustained growth in demand in the District Court by committing funding of \$34 million over four years and \$8.8 million per annum. This includes \$17 million over four years and \$4.4 million per annum ongoing to support Legal Aid Queensland to provide its vital legal services to financially disadvantaged and vulnerable people. In relation to the District Court funding, I also want to acknowledge that we are increasing the District Court by an additional three District Court judges which is the largest increase that this court has seen in many years. The Coroners Court is also receiving a substantial funding boost, with an additional \$18.9 million over four years and \$5.8 million per annum ongoing to support sustainable resourcing of the court. Of course, we have new coroners also being appointed.

Queenslanders can be sure that the Queensland government is committed to delivering a fair, well-resourced and accessible justice system in our state. To support this ongoing work, we are committed to undertaking these important reforms to keep our communities safe. However, I note with disappointment the remarks contained in the opposition's statement of reservation. Clearly the LNP members of the committee entirely failed to engage with the answers I provided during the hearing and seem to have just copied and pasted their usual nonsense in their statement of reservation. I am particularly appalled with the LNP's insistence on politicising the horrific allegations recently made in relation to a childcare worker. I must also note with concern the inferences the LNP continues to make against the hardworking professional staff of the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation. It just goes to show it cannot resist denigrating public servants. The last thing I note, as Minister Ryan said this morning, was that the Leader of the Opposition said he was looking forward to attending that day but was a no-show for the whole day. I do thank all of the department, my director-general, Hansard and the committee.

(Time expired)