



Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 20 August 2024


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee, Report

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (8.25 pm): I rise to speak to the Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee's report into the 2024-25 Appropriation Bill. For some time now, Queenslanders have told me that this government is out of touch and arrogant, and what we learnt from the estimates hearings is that, as usual, Queenslanders are right. When Queenslanders call for help, our emergency services respond with dedication and bravery, regardless of whether they are paid employees or volunteers. Sadly, that dedication is not matched by this government. For 10 years, Queenslanders have been promised a service that would revolutionise the way help is delivered to boaties in distress, and more than two years ago the minister revealed the name of that service. Despite all the promises and all that time, what was actually delivered were fewer units transitioning to Marine Rescue Queensland and a situation where the transition of coastguard units to the new entity was described as 'delicate' with no guaranteed time frames provided. Clearly, as proven during the hearings, this government's arrogance has resulted in a failure to plan and a failure to consult with the volunteers that we rely upon.

It is not just on the water where this government has failed and has increased the risk faced by Queenslanders. Whilst it is bad enough that we have seen yet another reduction in the number of State Emergency Service volunteers, we learned that virtually overnight more than 3,000 volunteers were relegated to the sidelines because this government failed to manage the transition process. Make no mistake: this government's failure means that, as at 30 June, only 786 of the 5,000 State Emergency Service volunteers had completed initial training—a figure that will send a chill up the spine of Queenslanders staring down the official start of a cyclone season and the threat of flooding.

Regardless, whether they are paid or volunteers, our firefighters save lives and property, but this government is putting their very lives at risk. Twelve months ago I raised the issue of potentially unroadworthy appliances used by our Rural Fire Services, and what we learned during the estimates hearing is that this government has approved the use of these appliances in an emergency response situation, putting both volunteer responders and the general public at risk. Let's put that in perspective. We are asking our rural firefighters to attend a fire in a vehicle that is unroadworthy. But it is not just volunteers that this government is putting at risk because, despite the price that may be paid by staff working at a station affected by carcinogenic materials, the commissioner confirmed that the department has no intention of replacing the fire and rescue station at Ayr.

When it comes to facilities, we learned taxpayers footed the bill for a \$6.8 million station at Bracken Ridge that was destined for demolition before construction commenced, and that Rural Fire Service facilities were not compliant prior to the government taking responsibility for them.

Moving onto corrections, what a debacle that turned out to be. This minister, despite repeated questioning, refused to answer questions relating to the circumstances surrounding the resignation of the former president of the Parole Board. Her attempts since estimates to set the record straight leave a lot to be desired. Who could forget the shambolic performance of this minister who during the hearing could not recall any allegations but just a few hours later confirmed she was advised of a referral? All that Queenslanders have asked for is what they deserve, and that is the truth.

We also learned that the amount of drug related contraband within correctional centres has increased and that cell utilisation was at more than 143 per cent, despite the promises of this government to address that issue. In addition, under this government, the trial of body scanners at the Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre was delayed and taxpayers have footed the bill for more than \$3 million in travel costs for prisoners.

The estimates process is about assessing the value of the government's proposed expenditure. Clearly, this government does not value the work that our volunteers and employees do to keep us safe. It is Queenslanders who will bear the ultimate cost of this government's arrogance and failures.