



Speech By
Peter Russo
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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 RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (8.00 pm): On 14 June, the Appropriation Bill and the estimates for the committee's areas of responsibility were referred to the Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee for investigation and report. The committee met to examine the bill for the 2024-25 financial year, and the findings of the committee are included in report No. 16, tabled on Friday, 9 August.

Consideration of the appropriation bills through the budget estimates process is one of the key mechanisms to examine government expenditure, performance and effectiveness. By examining and reporting on the proposed expenditures contained within the bill committees assist the parliament in its scrutiny of the government's proposed expenditure. Members who were not on the portfolio committee attended and participated in the hearing and asked questions. The committee gave leave to members of the opposition and minor parties to participate in the budget estimates hearing. I thank those members for their interest and engagement in the budget estimates hearing.

The committee's examination of the Appropriation Bill 2024 was in relation to: justice and Attorney-General; prevention of domestic and family violence; police and community safety; fire and disaster recovery; and corrective services. At the committee's hearing on 26 July we took evidence about the proposed expenditure from the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence; the Minister for Police and Community Safety; the Minister for Fire and Disaster Recovery and Minister for Corrective Services and other witnesses. Prior to the public hearing the committee provided the Attorney-General and minister with questions on notice in relation to estimates. Responses to all questions raised were received. I thank the Attorney-General and ministers for their fulsome responses to questions from the committee.

The committee's recommendation is that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2024 for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

Queensland's economic performance over recent years has bolstered the government's ability to continue to manage a responsible budget while increasing spending where it matters most. Appearing at her final estimates hearing, the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for

the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence answered questions in respect of her portfolio's plan for the year ahead. I note particularly the increases in funding to be used to work to end all forms of domestic, family and sexual violence in Queensland and to provide support for victims of crime.

As the committee heard during the examination of the portfolio area for police, the Queensland Police Service continues its positive trend in recruitment to support its service of a growing population. The committee was also advised that the rate of offending in Queensland, including domestic violence offences, is on the decline.

The creation of a new agency, Marine Rescue Queensland, and having it and State Emergency Services under the responsibility of the Queensland Police Service will ensure that these viable agencies are appropriately supported into the future. The bringing together of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and Rural Fire Services Queensland under the banner of the Queensland Fire Department will assist in protecting Queensland communities by ensuring that firefighters and volunteers have the best available resources and legal protections. The budget provides them with more facilities and appliances for their important work.

This year's budget has a strong emphasis on responding to disasters. The committee heard about the additional frontline jobs in, and funding administered by, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. Funding will be used to rebuild after the challenging disaster season and to fortify our communities against future disasters.

Queensland Corrective Services continues to work to respond to the needs of an increased prisoner population in Queensland. In particular, I note the construction of the new Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre and the delivery of programs which aim to maximise rehabilitation and reduce recidivism.

The opposition members of the committee agree with the passing of the 2024 budget; however, in the opposition's statement of reservation they said—

... the government has failed to provide reassurance that its policies are meeting the significant challenges that face the state—the cost of living crisis, the crime crisis and the housing crisis.

They further stated 'effective service delivery comes a distant second', which I totally disagree with.