




Speech By
Peter Russo
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

Record of Proceedings, 26 August 2025

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; JUSTICE,
INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE, REPORT**

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (5.52 pm): I rise to speak in relation to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee's estimates hearing for 2025. The estimates process is one of parliament's key mechanisms for examining government expenditure, performance and effectiveness. It is designed to hold the government to account for how it spends public funds, to scrutinise whether these funds are being used effectively and to ensure that Queenslanders are receiving the services and the protections they deserve.

By examining and reporting on the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill, the committee assists the parliament in its fundamental role of scrutinising the government's budgetary priorities and their delivery. This year the appropriations examined by the committee covered the portfolio areas of three key ministers—the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity, the Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services, and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

The following departments and agencies fell under the scope of our examination: Queensland Police Service, Queensland Corrective Services, Department of Justice, Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support, Electoral Commission of Queensland, Office of the Ombudsman and Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management. The hearing took place on 5 August, with nine hours of examination allocated between 9 am and 8 pm. At the conclusion of the process, the committee recommended that the proposed expenditure as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2025 for our areas of responsibility be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

However, that outcome tells only part of the story. One of the greatest concerns for the opposition throughout this process was simply getting clear answers to straightforward questions. Too often ministers failed to respond directly, preferring to obfuscate, misdirect and bury answers under longwinded monologues that never actually addressed the issue at hand. A prime example came when the Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services was asked whether a young person could be locked in their cell for up to 24 hours. She refused to answer. The director-general was then asked the same question and he responded—

... they are recorded in a system: up to two hours, between two and 12 hours, and then 12 hours or more ... I cannot think when a young person, even in natural disasters, has spent more than 24 hours in a cell.

The question was not whether anyone had been locked up for more than 24 hours; it was whether they could be locked up for 24 hours. The distinction matters, and the refusal to give a straight answer speaks volumes.

During estimates we witnessed a textbook display of diversion and deflection from the member for Currumbin. When asked by the member for Bulimba for clarity on night mode and whether youth offenders are locked in their cells, Minister Gerber said that night mode was a local name used at the

Cleveland Youth Detection Centre and it is correctly called separations. She then launched into a lengthy explanation of the terminology before wandering off into unrelated territory. When pressed for a simple yes-or-no answer on whether youth offenders can be locked in their cells for up to 24 hours, Minister Gerber claimed it was not a yes-or-no question. Eventually, the director-general attempted to answer but still failed to give a definitive response.

Follow-up questions on whether these separations occurred due to staff shortages were also sidestepped and replaced with political attacks on past Labor governments. All the while, Minister Gerber was supported by interjections from her LNP colleagues. The Australian Workers' Union Queensland branch secretary has stated that there have been over 300 staff shortage incidences at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre since the start of 2025.