



Speech By  
**Dale Last**

**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2021

## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

### **APPROPRIATION BILL**

#### **Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

#### **Appropriation Bill**

#### **Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (12.20 pm): I rise to speak to the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee's report into the 2021-22 budget estimates. I thank the committee for granting me leave to appear at the hearing. I certainly want to put on record my appreciation of the respective commissioners for their candour and willingness to answer the questions we asked at the hearing. What that estimates process did, however, was raise more questions than answers, particularly when it came to those crucial areas of police, fire and emergency services and corrective services.

Given that estimates hearings are about questions, Queenslanders have a right to expect answers. Instead, we saw more examples of Labor's failures, more attempts by the minister to deflect blame and, more importantly, issues that have been overlooked. No statement illustrates more perfectly this government's lack of care for victims of crime than the Minister for Police interjecting over the Commissioner of Police to advise that the value of property in vehicles stolen in Townsville by juvenile offenders is 'irrelevant to these proceedings'.

The very reason we have a Police Service in this state is to protect members of the community and their property. Our Police Service is funded for that reason: to protect people and their property. Regardless of the proceedings, Queenslanders expect their police minister to put their safety and the safety of their property first. Police is a massive portfolio—

**Mr RYAN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find the imputation in the member's statement offensive and I ask for that statement to be withdrawn.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Krause): I will take some advice.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. My understanding under the standing orders is that for one to take offence and ask for a member to withdraw, the imputation has to apply to the individual. The police minister was not mentioned. I heard the comment 'police is a big portfolio'. I do not see how one can take offence at that when it has not been directly responded to. I cannot see the point of order.

**Mr RYAN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on the point of order. The member specifically mentioned me and said that I do not take these matters seriously. Of course I do. The inference in that is personally offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Burdekin, it would aid the passage of this debate in the House if you were willing to withdraw. Unfortunately, on this occasion both the Clerk and I are not in receipt of what was precisely said. If you could please aid the House in this respect?

**Mr LAST:** Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker. I withdraw. Police is a massive portfolio, and the fact that we only managed to get through half a dozen questions demonstrates how flawed the budget estimates process has become.

Turning to Corrective Services now, the estimates hearing revealed yet another deception by this government and the current minister. This time the deception is aimed fairly and squarely at the brave men and women who work in our correction system. While our prisons remain overcrowded due to this government's lack of planning and staff assaults continue to be more than triple the target, this government has not only short-changed staff but has tried to deceive them. While budget documents state there will be an additional 344 staff, the commissioner confirmed there is in fact only an additional 104 staff. Then, of course, we have the \$8 million worth of bunk beds in high-security correctional centres. I have no doubt that Queenslanders were shocked to hear that at best this will provide a bed for an extra 250 prisoners, with each additional bed to cost taxpayers \$32,000 each.

Queenslanders will be appalled to hear that, almost five years after recommendations were made and accepted by this government, victims of domestic violence and other serious crime still do not have the protections that the Sofronoff review recommended. We still have no ironclad commitment that they will be implemented by 30 June next year when the funding runs out.

Moving on to Fire and Emergency Services, we saw the continuation of this minister's usual approach of withholding reviews such as the report into the Townsville Stronger Communities Action Group. I note that up to today it has still not been released, and it should be released in the interests of transparency. The Townsville community deserves to see the results of the review into the actions of that particular group. The SES review has still not seen the light of day despite being finalised 18 months ago. Maybe things will be different when the KPMG review of the QFES structure, which was announced in December 2020 and commenced seven months later, is made public. I guess we will just have to wait and see whether that actually occurs. Perhaps the most concerning issue when it comes to Fire and Emergency Services is the almost \$7 million in cuts to the QFES capital expenditure program and the fact that, despite the actual appropriation revenue for the last financial year being more than double the budget amount, this year's appropriation revenue is almost 46 per cent lower.

Estimates is a process where we ask questions of the minister and we ask questions of the government. I would have loved to have had the opportunity to ask questions around youth offending rates; around the road toll, which is on track to be the worst in history; around the service realignment program; recruitment targets; and of course the Blue Water Review, which is going to have a significant impact on our volunteer marine rescue and coastguard units across the state. Despite the government's attempts to keep the facts hidden from Queenslanders, the estimates hearings proved once and for all that this government is deceptive and disingenuous and that this minister is more about withholding information than being open and accountable—

**Mr RYAN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks personally offensive and I ask for them to be withdrawn.

**Mr LAST:** I withdraw.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Krause): I assume that concludes your contribution, member for Burdekin.