



Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 24 February 2021

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (11.22 am): I rise to contribute to the appropriation debate and speak to the estimates report from the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee. I state at the outset my disappointment with the estimates process. I know that the minister stood in this place yesterday and bemoaned the fact that he was not asked very many questions during the estimates process. There is very good reason for that. We wanted answers. We wanted to get to the bottom of some of the crucial questions around budgetary requirements and performance. I want to acknowledge all of the commissioners from the emergency services who gave evidence at estimates and I want to thank them for their honesty and their willingness to participate in the process and to provide the relevant information.

From the outset, it must be said that the past year has had, and the months ahead will continue to have, immense challenges in the areas of law and order in our corrections system and for our Fire and Emergency Services. This estimates process has highlighted the importance of planning and, in the case of this government, the lack thereof and the consequences of that failure to plan. As an example, you cannot build a new prison in this state overnight. With our prisons chronically overcrowded, one has to wonder how this issue will be addressed in the short term. We should all be concerned with the rapid decline in the numbers of SES personnel across the state—something that has not happened overnight but is of critical importance in terms of providing a response during times of emergency or disaster.

I will start with the Queensland Police Service. During the 2020 campaign, this government committed to an extra 2,025 police personnel by 2025. It is important to recognise that that commitment is for police personnel. As someone who has spent 25 years in a police uniform, I know the important role that civilians play, but it is vitally important that we note that, of those 2,025 personnel, 1,450 will be sworn officers. I have great concerns about the Labor government's ability to deliver on this commitment, but I do note the commissioner's comments that she believes it is achievable. The LNP will ensure that this commitment is honoured and that the Police Commissioner's confidence is not betrayed.

Unfortunately, many Queensland communities have been betrayed. The budget process has revealed that policing services like police beats are facing closure—something the LNP firmly opposes given the current crime epidemic tearing at the heart of this state. It is interesting to note that, of the

amounts committed in the budget for new and replacement police facilities, approximately 76 per cent is allocated to South-East Queensland and, in my electorate, there is no funding for the promised Clermont police station.

I will move on to corrective services, an area that shows this government is letting down Queenslanders and the brave men and women who work in our corrections system. This budget shows cuts to supplies and services of 12 per cent despite increases in prisoner numbers—something the minister needs to explain. It also shows a corrections system where all categories of assaults are well above targets, where the value of community service work ordered by the courts will reduce by almost 40 per cent and where one-third of Queensland's corrections centres had more prisoners than beds. In short, this government has failed to plan and it has failed to address the issue of overcrowding.

In the area of fire and emergency services, this budget confirms yet another area, vital to the safety of Queenslanders, having their supplies and services budget cut—this time by 23 per cent. Again, the minister needs to explain how this will be achieved without putting staff or Queenslanders at greater risk.

During the budget process, we prosecuted the debacle around the Fraser Island bushfires. How a fire could be allowed to burn for six weeks before QFES became involved or how the large aerial water tanker was allowed to sit on the tarmac at the airport for a week because aircrew needed to have days off defies logic. I look forward to the results of the review into the handling and response to that disaster.

This is a budget that does little to make Queensland and Queenslanders feel safer. The impending closure of police beats and establishments is cause for concern and, given the current youth crime crisis gripping this state, is it any wonder Queenslanders are questioning the ability of this government to keep them safe? This is about community safety and ensuring our hardworking emergency service personnel and volunteers are supported, and I will continue to fight and advocate on their behalf.

(Time expired)