

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF QUEENSLAND

SEPTEMBER 1998

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. EXAMINATION OF THE PROPOSED EXPENDITURES.....	1
2.1. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL	1
2.1.1. <i>Overview.....</i>	<i>1</i>
2.1.2. <i>Additional Court of Appeal Judge</i>	<i>2</i>
2.1.3. <i>Legal Aid.....</i>	<i>2</i>
2.1.4. <i>Victims of Crime Support Groups.....</i>	<i>2</i>
2.1.5. <i>Repairs to the Roma Court House.....</i>	<i>2</i>
2.1.6. <i>Queensland Biennial Festival of Music</i>	<i>2</i>
2.1.7. <i>Capital works projects - cultural infrastructure</i>	<i>3</i>
2.1.8. <i>Youth Arts Programs</i>	<i>3</i>
2.2. QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE AND QUEENSLAND CORRECTIVE SERVICES COMMISSION.....	4
2.2.1. <i>Overview.....</i>	<i>4</i>
2.2.2. <i>Capital Works — Infrastructure Rejuvenation Program</i>	<i>4</i>
2.2.3. <i>Target Police Strength</i>	<i>5</i>
2.2.4. <i>Police Recruitment.....</i>	<i>5</i>
2.2.5. <i>Police Shop Fronts</i>	<i>5</i>
2.2.6. <i>Police Beat Program.....</i>	<i>6</i>
2.2.7. <i>Police Airwing - new aircraft.....</i>	<i>6</i>
2.2.8. <i>QCSC - Additional Correctional Officers</i>	<i>6</i>
2.2.9. <i>QCSC - Capital Works</i>	<i>6</i>
2.2.10. <i>QCSC - Upgrade of Security Equipment.....</i>	<i>7</i>
2.3. DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES, QUEENSLAND AMBULANCE SERVICE & QUEENSLAND FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY	7
2.3.1. <i>Overview.....</i>	<i>7</i>
2.3.2. <i>Free Ambulance Services.....</i>	<i>7</i>
2.3.3. <i>Rural Fire Services - Enhanced Funding</i>	<i>8</i>
2.3.4. <i>Rural Fire Services - new vehicles.....</i>	<i>8</i>
2.3.5. <i>QFRA - Hot Fire Training Facility</i>	<i>8</i>
2.3.6. <i>QAS - Capital Works.....</i>	<i>9</i>
3. RECOMMENDATION.....	9
4. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	9
5. DISSENTING REPORT & STATEMENT OF RESERVATION.....	10

1. INTRODUCTION

On 15 September 1998, the Legislative Assembly referred proposed expenditures contained in the Appropriation Bill 1998 to estimates committees for examination and report. Organisational units within the portfolios of the following Ministers were allocated to Estimates Committee B —

- Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Arts
- Minister for Police and Corrective Services, and
- Minister for Emergency Services.

The committee has considered the proposed expenditure using the various budget documents and written and verbal evidence from the relevant Ministers and public officials. Documents tabled during the hearing, answers to questions on notice and questions taken on notice at the hearing will be tabled separately in the Legislative Assembly.

The committee draws the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the following matters.

2. EXAMINATION OF THE PROPOSED EXPENDITURES

2.1. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL

2.1.1. Overview

The committee examined proposed expenditure of \$432,413,000 for 1998-99. This is an increase of \$42,585,000 from last year's actual expenditure.

New initiatives include:

- an increase in funding for legal aid of \$5 million per annum
- the appointment of another judge to the Court of Appeal
- reviewing the impact of the criminal code on women
- reviewing Freedom of Information legislation
- extending the Brisbane Biennial Festival of Music into regional Queensland so that it becomes the Queensland Biennial Festival of Music
- increased funding to the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF).

2.1.2. Additional Court of Appeal Judge

The Minister has responded to the recommendation from the President of the Court of Appeal to appoint another judge to that court. This will cost \$380,000. For many years, there has been a backlog of criminal cases. In order to achieve maximum benefit from having an additional judge, the Minister has also increased funding to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (an additional \$0.4 million), Legal Aid (an additional \$0.3 million) and provided an extra \$0.2 million to fund brief out fees in 1998-99. This will increase the workload in the Court of Appeal.

2.1.3. Legal Aid

From 1 January 1999, Legal Aid will receive an additional \$5 million per year to top up its base budget of \$12.8 million. In the budget papers, this appears as an additional \$2.5 million because the extra \$5 million is available in the second half of the financial year. Legal Aid is also carrying over \$1.5 million from the previous financial year and receiving an additional \$0.5 million in funding. This gives it a total estimated budget of \$15,803,000 for 1998-99.

The Minister hopes the increased budget will assist Legal Aid to represent all eligible clients despite the fact that the Commonwealth Government cut its budget by \$2 million.

2.1.4. Victims of Crime Support Groups

The Minister has provided an extra \$1 million to support the work of Victims of Crime groups. These groups are usually staffed by volunteers and provide support and counselling to victims of crime and their friends and family. Victims of Crime groups, such as Solace House at Albion, will be asked to apply for funding from the Department of Justice. The Department will enter into a service agreement with each group when they allocate the funds.

2.1.5. Repairs to the Roma Court House

The Minister has allocated \$1.1 million to repair major structural damage in the Roma Court House. Prolonged drought has caused the soil to shrink which has affected the foundations and walls of the building. The court house is preliminarily listed on the Heritage Register which makes the repair work more important and more difficult.

2.1.6. Queensland Biennial Festival of Music

What was known as the Brisbane Biennial Festival of Music will reach out into regional Queensland and become the Queensland Biennial Festival of Music. The Minister has allocated \$2 million to fund the festival and extend it into Mackay and Townsville. It will link with the Australian Festival of Chamber Music, the International Arts Festival (both held in Townsville) and the Mackay Festival of Arts.

The festival board reflects the festival's new regional flavour. Four of the nine members of the board are from regional Queensland (two from Townsville and two from Mackay). The deputy chair is Associate Professor Helen Lancaster of Mackay who heads the Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music.

2.1.7. Capital works projects - cultural infrastructure

To provide space for arts organisations in Brisbane, the Minister has allocated \$1.413 million for the redevelopment of Old Transport House and \$7.565 million for the refurbishment of the Empire Office Furniture building in the 1998-99 financial year. Both buildings are in Fortitude Valley which is a central location.

At Southbank, \$4 million is available to commence the Queensland Cultural Centre 2000 project and \$8.863 million was spent earlier this financial year to complete the Southbank Playhouse in time for the Brisbane Festival.

In regional Queensland, cultural infrastructure will receive the following funds:

- \$16.366 million for the completion of the Townsville Museum of Tropical Queensland
- \$2.25 million for the development of the Maryborough Cultural and Entertainment Centre
- \$0.5 million for the redevelopment of Ipswich's old town hall
- \$0.1 million for the development of a Caloundra Regional Art Gallery
- \$50,000 for a feasibility study to build a Redcliffe Cultural Centre.

2.1.8. Youth Arts Programs

In the 1998-99 financial year, \$0.5 million is available for youth arts programs. The funds will provide:

- approximately 30 youth radio traineeships over three years
- subsidised rehearsal space, promotional opportunities and touring support for emerging youth bands
- affordable entertainment for young people in regional areas
- music mentorships for over 100 young people over a three year period.

People between the ages of 12 and 25 will be eligible to receive this funding.

2.2. QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE AND QUEENSLAND CORRECTIVE SERVICES COMMISSION

2.2.1. Overview

The budget allocation for the Queensland Police Service (QPS) in 1998-99 is \$706 million. This is an increase of 10.6% on the comparable 1997-98 budget allocation.

QPS and Treasury have negotiated an agreement whereby the impact of the state's population growth is acknowledged by the provision of additional funding to QPS budget. For 1998-99, QPS's growth funding supplementation is \$6.126 million.

These funds will allow QPS to provide 60 additional police officers, 40 additional civilians and additional resources in areas of significant resource demand. The proposed allocation of growth funding is:

- 60 police officers + \$3.65m
- 40 staff civilian members + \$1.539m
- recurrent operational costs associated with the additional dog squads + \$0.144m
- recurrent operational costs associated with the additional Police Liaison Officers + \$0.144m
- enhanced professional development program ... + \$0.555m
- other + \$0.088m

2.2.2. Capital Works — Infrastructure Rejuvenation Program

The 1997-1998 budget allocated \$13.495 million for an infrastructure rejuvenation package, part of QPS capital works program. This allocation was for the Palm Beach police station, the Centenary station, a replacement Gladstone District headquarters and watchhouse and a replacement Brisbane City watchhouse. Brief details of these projects are given below.

Palm Beach Station: construction was completed in January 1998. Final expenditure of \$25,000 will occur in 1998-99 on completion of the project.

Centenary Station: construction was completed in March 1998. Final expenditure for the completed project will occur at a cost of \$105,000.

Gladstone District Headquarters and Watchhouse: design and documentation were completed in 1997-98 and construction commenced with \$2.605 million expended last financial year. Construction will be completed in December 1998 at a cost of \$4.943 million.

Brisbane City Watchhouse: In 1997-98, \$1.317 million was spent on demolition of buildings on the site, schematic design and the appointment of a managing contractor for completion of the design and the preparation of a Guaranteed Construction Cost for the project. Construction is expected to commence in 1998-99

and be completed in October 99. The total anticipated cost of the project is \$14.6 million with \$11.367 million being spent in the 1998-99 financial year.

2.2.3. Target Police Strength

The target police strength for the end of the 1998-99 financial year is 7,132. Increases in the overall funded strength for the 1998-99 financial year are expected to provide the following expected strengths:

Far North Region	523
Northern Region	516
Central Region	613
North Coast Region	878
Southern Region	699
South Eastern Region	1005
Metropolitan North Region	976
Metropolitan South Region	828

The allocation of positions to Districts and Divisions is determined by regional Assistant Commissioners taking into account the outcomes from the application of the Staffing Allocation Model and regional and local priorities and needs.

2.2.4. Police Recruitment

The police recruitment intake in the 1998-99 financial year will be 561. This recruitment rate is expected to ensure the target strength of QPS is met, given estimated attrition rates. Recruitment forward projections for the following years to 2004 will be based on revised attrition rate estimates. The revision will occur after actual separations in 1998-99.

Recruitment forward projection will provide the following estimated strengths:

YEAR	STRENGTH
1999	7123
2000	7519
2001	7876
2002	8174
2003	8481
2004	8778

2.2.5. Police Shop Fronts

10 additional police shopfronts will be provided in 1998-99 and 1999-2000. All are expected to be operational by 30 June 2000. Establishment of shopfronts is dependant on a number of factors including analysis of community need, police resource mix and the ability of QPS to acquire suitable accommodation for effective policing. QPS is developing a detailed implementation plan but as yet the list of proposed locations for new police shopfronts has not been finalised.

2.2.6. Police Beat Program

\$1 million has been allocated in the 1998-99 budget for the expansion of the Police Beat Program. QPS is still in the process of evaluating the implementation of Police Beats across the state. However, at this stage new police beats will be implemented in: Eagleby, Bray Park, Kallangur, Garbutt, South Townsville, Kelso, Slade Point, Urangan, Redcliffe, Riverview, Rasmussen and Trinity Beach.

Assessment of demands for service, the likelihood of effective problem identification and solution, local community interaction and proactive policing is used as a basis for operation of the program.

2.2.7. Police Airwing - new aircraft

The capacity of the Police Airwing will be significantly enhanced during the 1998-99 financial year with the provision of new hangar accommodation and the purchase of a new Cessna Citation Ultra fan jet to replace the current Cessna Citation II. \$9.7 million has been allocated for the purchase of the aircraft and \$1.1 million for the hangar.

The new aircraft will play an important role in the busy schedule flying between Brisbane and Cairns three times a week. The plane will also be used to extradite prisoners from interstate, to transport specialist services to and from operations and in emergency situations, including organ transplant flights.

2.2.8. QCSC - Additional Correctional Officers

The 1998-1999 budget provides \$1.5 million for additional staff in correctional centres. This amount is half the full year costs for 50 additional correctional officer positions. \$3 million will be allocated in future budgets to fund these positions.

The extra staff will be deployed in areas of visits processing, intelligence, drug detection, training and drug dog handling as well as prisoner supervision.

2.2.9. QCSC - Capital Works

QCSC has a capital works budget of \$178.109 million in 1998-99 for new and expanded centres. This compares with a capital works budget in 1997-1998 of \$80.349 million. The capital works program in this financial year is expected to generate over 2,000 job years of employment. The major projects and the estimates of employment that will be generated this financial year are:

Project	Job Years
Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre	495
Borrallon	233
Lotus Glen	178
SEQ1 and SEQW	164

2.2.10. QCSC - Upgrade of Security Equipment

The 1998-99 budget provides for \$1 million for the purchase of basic equipment for correctional officers. The money will be spent on a wide range of equipment including: improved video surveillance, specialised visits furniture, passive drug dogs, anti-drugs signage, protective helmets, vests, handcuffs, metal detectors, emergency response equipment, night vision binoculars, gas masks and filters, X-Ray machines, body-belts, alcolmeters, radios, communications maintenance systems and weapons.

2.3. DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES, QUEENSLAND AMBULANCE SERVICE & QUEENSLAND FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

2.3.1. Overview

The 1998-99 budget for the Department of Emergency Services is \$157.1 million, which represents an increase of \$29.3 million (22.9%) over the 1997-98 budget. Important 1998-99 budget initiatives for the Department are the enhancement of the Queensland Disaster Management System (\$0.7 million), supporting the volunteers guarding Queensland's coast (\$0.6 million), an extension of the Energex rescue service (\$0.25 million) and the SES floodboat replacement program (\$0.25 million).

The 1998-99 budget also provides \$177.3 million for the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS), up from \$158 million in 1997-98, and \$209 million for the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority (QFRA), up from \$192 million in 1997-98.

2.3.2. Free Ambulance Services

The state government will provide free ambulance services to all Queensland pensioners and Seniors Card Holders and their dependants from 1 January 1999. The scheme will cover approximately 850,000 people. Pensioner groups included in the scheme include:

- all Department of Social Security and Department of Veteran's Affairs pensioners (including Carer and Parenting Payment (single))
- Mature Age and Mature Age Partner allowees
- Bereavement allowees
- Newstart, Widow, Partner and Sickness allowees, Special Benefit and some Parenting recipients aged 60 or older who have been in receipt of income support for nine months or more.

The scheme is expected to cost \$15 million, which includes \$13.35 million in lost subscriptions and \$1.65 million in implementation and administration costs. The

Department is still to determine the breakdown of cost into salaries, vehicles, capital equipment et cetera and locations associated with the government's commitment.

2.3.3. Rural Fire Services - Enhanced Funding

The 1998-99 budget provides for enhanced capital funding for Rural Fire Services. The funding initiative will provide the Rural Fire Service with an additional \$3.5 million over four years. \$0.5 million will be provided in 1998-99. This allocation will comprise

- \$0.05 million increased funding for personal protective equipment
- \$0.01 million for implementation of the revised communications band plan
- \$0.1 million increased funding for general subsidised equipment
- \$0.09 million increased funding for fire station construction grants
- \$0.25 million increased funding for equipment enhancements on rural firefighting appliances.

2.3.4. Rural Fire Services - new vehicles

The 1998-99 budget allocates \$4,075,354 for vehicle construction. 96 vehicles are to be delivered in 1998-99, including 22 medium appliances held over from the previous year's program. The 74 vehicles from this year's program comprise 51 medium appliances and 23 light appliances.

2.3.5. QFRA - Hot Fire Training Facility

There is a budget allocation of \$2.8 million in 1998-99 for the construction of a hot fire training facility in Brisbane. The total estimated cost of the facility is \$5.6 million. The hot fire training facility will enable the QFRA to ensure that its training facilities equate with those in other parts of Australia. The facility will incorporate simulation scenarios involving:

- marine fire suppression and incident management
- aircraft fire suppression and incident management
- structural fire suppression
- breathing apparatus training
- fire investigation
- LPG firefighting
- road accident rescue extrication
- fire suppression management
- hazardous materials incident management.

2.3.6. QAS - Capital Works

The 1998-99 budget includes \$7.3 million for capital works by the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS). Ambulance stations to be built or refurbished out of this capital works budget are set out below.

Project	Total Estimated Cost \$'000	1998-99 Estimate \$'000
Replacement Station - Bamaga	350	350
Replacement Station - Bribie Island	430	408
Replacement Station - Childers	450	450
Replacement Station - Cleveland	925	409
Replacement Station - Cooroy	526	215
Refurbishment - Dalby	250	250
New Station - Karumba	125	125
New Station - Macleay Island	100	100
Replacement Station - Meandarra	366	88
New Station - Mornington Island	193	193
New Station - North Rockhampton	550	545
New Station - Redland Bay	450	442
New Station - Rosewood	500	226
New Station - West Toowoomba	255	50

3. RECOMMENDATION

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as outlined in the Appropriation Bill 1998 for the organisational units in the portfolios referred to it, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

4. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The committee thanks the Ministers and departmental staff for their cooperation during the estimates process. The committee acknowledges the support and assistance of the staff from Hansard and the committee's secretariat.

Mr Pat Purcell MLA
Chairman

5. DISSENTING REPORT & STATEMENT OF RESERVATION

DISSENTING REPORT

14 October, 1998

1. Department of Emergency Services

- 1.1 The Opposition has not been able to properly scrutinise the funding allocations for the Queensland Fire Service due to the Minister's persistent refusal to release a report by accounting firm, Price Waterhouse Coopers, into the alleged funding difficulties of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority.

Despite the Minister's public allegations that the QFRA's finances were poorly managed and that the QFRA was facing possible debt, the Opposition notes on page 2-11 of the Ministerial Program Statement that the State Fire Service Trust Fund had a closing balance of \$18,705,000 at the end of the 1997-98 financial year.

When the Minister was asked, in a question on notice from the Estimates Committee, to provide a copy of the report which allegedly outlined the alleged financial trouble, she refused to provide a copy and again refused when asked during the Estimates Committee proceedings.

The Opposition has therefore been unable to determine the appropriateness of funding to the Queensland Fire Service in the 1998/99 Budget allocations.

The Opposition views the Minister's refusal to provide the Committee with legitimate advice in relation to the status of the QFRA, as a deliberate attempt to stifle scrutiny on the 1998/99 Program Statements.

The report was not funded from the Minister's own office Budget, But was funded by the QFRA and should have been made available for scrutiny.

Lawrence Springborg MLA
Shadow Attorney-General & Shadow Minister for Justice

Allan Grice OAM MLA
Shadow Minister for Police & Corrective Services

Ted Malone MLA
Shadow Minister for Emergency Services

**STATEMENT OF RESERVATION
ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B****1. Procedural Matter – Question Taken on Notice**

During the committee's hearing I asked the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, Hon Tom Barton if he would take a question about the QPS capital works program on notice. The committee unanimously agreed that the Minister had taken this question on notice.

In a letter sent after the hearing the Minister advised that he would not provide an answer to the question. He argued that the question was not asked during the course of the hearings, he was not given a opportunity to respond and he had not in fact taken the question on notice.

The Chairman spoke with the Minister on the committee's behalf and asked him to reconsider his position and answer the question. The Minister again declined the committee's request.

It is disappointing that the Minister repeatedly declined to answer this simple question. His decisions not to answer run counter to the interests of open and accountable government.

**Allan Grice OAM MLA
Shadow Minister for Police & Corrective Services**