



# ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E - 2003 REPORT

## Introduction

1. The sessional orders adopted by the Legislative Assembly on 30 April 2003 established seven estimates committees to consider proposed expenditure under the *Appropriation Bill 2003* and the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2003*.
2. Estimates Committee E was to examine and report on the proposed expenditure for the organisational units within the portfolios of the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines, the Minister for Environment, and the Minister for Local Government and Planning.
3. The committee held a public hearing on 22 July 2003 to take evidence from the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines, the Minister for Environment, and the Minister for Local Government and Planning. A transcript of the committee's hearing can be accessed on the Internet at: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/hansard/>.
4. For the purpose of examining the proposed expenditure for the organisational units allocated to it, the committee considered information obtained at the public hearing in conjunction with:
  - budget papers and Ministerial Portfolio Statements (MPS) tabled by the Treasurer
  - written responses to questions on notice submitted to the Ministers by the committee prior to the public hearing, and
  - other information provided by the Ministers.
5. Accompanying this report is a volume of "Additional Information" presented by the committee to the Legislative Assembly. The additional information includes the minutes of the committee's meetings, documents tabled at the hearing and answers to questions on notices before and during the public hearing.

## Minister for Natural Resources and Mines

6. The Department of Natural Resources and Mines aims to provide a broad range of services, legislative initiatives and policies to ensure that the State's land, mineral and water resources are used sustainably and provide a social and economic return to the community.
7. The total appropriation for the Department of Natural Resources and Mines in 2003-04 is \$350.6 million. The MPS provides the following output summary.

Output	Total Cost \$'000
Integrated Natural Resource Planning	89,175
Integrated Natural Resource Management and Use	251,031
Mining Safety and Health	28,343
Mineral and Petroleum Exploration and Development	28,178
Dispute Resolution	1,341
<b>Total</b>	<b>398,068</b>

*Source: State Budget 2003-04 MPS – Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines p.7.*

8. Highlights in the budget as proposed for the Department of Natural Resources and Mines for the 2003-04 year include:
  - \$8 million over four years to the Integrated Natural Resource Management Compliance initiative
  - an extra \$1.78 million to continue the Great Artesian Basin Sustainability initiative
  - \$3.5 million over four years to the new Cultural Heritage legislation, and
  - an additional \$75 million over five years to the \$150 million Commonwealth-State tree clearing reduction package.

9. During the public hearing the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines responded to questions from the committee in relation to the budget highlights and a wide range of matters, including:
- operations of SunWater
  - expenditure on advertising for the Department of Natural Resources and Mines
  - capital investment in mining and petroleum projects
  - mining royalties
  - grants of exploration permits and mining tenure
  - internal transfer of the Native Title Services unit from the mining output to the integrated resource management output
  - potential for the exploration of geothermal energy in Queensland
  - Queensland's coal seam gas industry
  - improved security for explosives storage facilities
  - Rehabilitation of Abandoned Mines program
  - legislative initiatives to facilitate further exploration and sustainable development
  - National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality
  - Brisbane River Flood Study report
  - progress on water reform and water trading
  - establishment of property rights and water for land-holders
  - interim water charges for licence holders and existing water harvesters
  - extended Rural Water Use Efficiency initiative
  - water resource planning, in particular the Condamine-Balonne water resource plan, and
  - new *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*.

## Minister for Environment

10. As the lead agency for environmental matters the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which incorporates the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, works to maintain a clean environment, protect Queensland's natural and cultural heritage, and promote sustainable use of Queensland's natural capital.
11. The total appropriation for the EPA in 2003-04 is \$266.669 million. The MPS provides the following output summary.

Output	Total Cost \$'000
Protecting our Natural and Cultural Heritage	149,677
Promoting Sustainable use of our Natural Capital	95,167
Ensuring a Clean Environment	56,332
<b>Total</b>	<b>301,176</b>

*Source: State Budget 2003-04 MPS – Minister for Environment, p.5.*

12. Highlights in the budget as proposed by the EPA for the 2003-04 year include:
- \$0.5 million to investigate the tenure change process as part of the expansion of the conservation estate from forest estate
  - \$0.5 million to provide on-park facilities in Cape York to enhance visitation growth under the whole-of-government Growing Tourism program
  - \$2 million towards the continued development of the six Great Walks of Queensland projects
  - implementation of the five year Solar Schools Goes Bush program
  - establishment of the three new EPA extension programs under the EnergyWise, WaterWise and WasteWise labels to promote more resource efficiency and productivity by Queensland industry
  - implementation of the State-wide Best Practice Kerbside Recycling program in conjunction with local governments, and

- survey and map a further 8 million hectares of the state’s vegetation and regional ecosystems.
13. During the public hearing the Minister for Environment responded to questions from the committee in relation to budget highlights and a wide range of matters, including:
- departmental activities
  - staffing issues
  - Koala Coast conservation plan, in particular in relation to Karreman quarry
  - area management plan for the Gold Coast hinterland
  - trial of ethanol blended fuel in Cairns
  - strategies to protect and enhance open space
  - EPA’s role in the whole-of-government development approval process
  - state-wide strategies to manage flying foxes, in particular in Charters Towers
  - dingo management strategy
  - EcoAccess services
  - issues in relation to cultural heritage
  - Queensland’s marine parks
  - strategies for developing and maintaining Queensland’s national parks
  - regional landscape strategy
  - conservation plan for macropods
  - catchment site inspection programs
  - ChemCollect program
  - conservation and management plan for crocodiles
  - South-East Queensland Forest Agreement
  - damage mitigation permits
  - trial of biodegradable bait bags
  - Smart Service Queensland initiative, and
  - Fraser Island Visitors Management initiatives.

### Minister for Local Government and Planning

14. The Department of Local Government and Planning’s vision is to achieve well governed, sustainable communities that are a safe and satisfying place to live.
15. The total appropriation for the Department of Local Government and Planning in 2003-04 is \$497.64 million. The MPS provides the following output summary.

Output	Total Cost \$’000
Advice and Services for Good Local Governance	4,841
Funding for Local Government Infrastructure and Facilities	163,330
Planning and Development Services	16,686
<b>Total</b>	<b>184,857</b>

*Source: State Budget 2003-04 MPS – Minister for Local Government and Planning, p.6.*

16. Highlights in the budget as proposed by the Department of Local Government and Planning for the 2003-04 year include:
- an additional \$50 million over four years to extend the Regional Centres program
  - Queensland Local Government Grants Commission review of grants to Queensland councils
  - continue to implement the initiatives associated with the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*, and
  - a further \$0.5 million to continue the work of the City West Taskforce.
17. During the public hearing the Minister for Local Government and Planning responded to questions from the committee in relation to budget highlights and a wide range of matters, including:
- departmental activities
  - expenditure on overseas travel and hospitality for the department
  - flood mitigation issues

- transfer of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality program to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines
- issues surrounding the grant and subsidy payments to local government
- development conditions in relation to the Royal Pines Resort proposal
- use of funding allocated to the Eastern Downs Regional Organisation of Councils
- local government charges and associated issues
- progress of the roads off-alignment intergovernmental task force
- initiatives to provide assistance to drought stricken local councils
- preparation for the 2004 local government election
- Electoral Commission review of electoral procedures following the 2004 local government election
- progress of the South East Queensland 2021 comprehensive review
- new building and plumbing codes
- outcomes from the review of swimming pools safety standards
- effects of development approval litigation on local government
- Councillors as Leaders in Local Communities course
- developing a sustainable model for affordable housing
- achievements of the Security Improvement program
- Rural Living Infrastructure program objectives, and
- provision of the latest planning information and demographic analysis to assist local governments and other users to plan future services and infrastructure.

## **Recommendation**

18. The committee recommends that the proposed expenditures, as stated in the *Appropriation Bill 2003* for the organisational units within the portfolios referred to Estimates Committee E for examination, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

## **Acknowledgments**

19. The committee thanks the ministers and their departmental officers for their cooperation and assistance throughout the estimates process. The committee also acknowledges the support and assistance of the committee's secretariat and those other officers of the Parliamentary Service who contributed to the conduct of the estimates process.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan MP  
Chair

19 August 2003

## **Membership**

Mrs Carryn Sullivan MP, Chair, Member for Pumicestone

Hon Vince Lester MP, Deputy Chair, Member for Keppel

Ms Cate Molloy MP, Member for Noosa

Ms Anita Phillips MP, Member for Thuringowa

Mrs Christine Scott MP, Member for Charters Towers

Mr Jeff Seeney MP, Member for Callide

Mr Howard Hobbs MP, Member for Warrego

## **Secretariat**

Ms Rachelle Stacey (Research Director)

Ms Carolyn Heffernan (Executive Assistant)

## STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS

### ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

**Submitted by Howard Hobbs MP  
Shadow Minister for Local Government and Planning, Regional and Rural Communities,  
and Trade**

**11 August 2003**

At the meeting of Estimates Committee E held on Wednesday 5th June 2003 at 1-00pm, it was determined that Ministers answers to Questions on Notice in relation to Estimates Committee E would be required to be returned to the Research Director by 3-00pm Monday 14th July 2003.

This decision of Estimates Committee E was made conscious of Sessional Order 26(3) which provides that "The Minister or Mr Speaker shall provide answers to questions referred to in (1) above, at least 24 hours prior to the hearing."

The decision of the Committee on 5th June 2003, was made, notwithstanding the Sessional Order, in an endeavour to ensure that all Members of the Committee were provided with answers to Questions on Notice in order to enable adequate time for matters raised in such answers to be properly addressed.

I note that the Minister for Local Government and Planning failed to comply with this decision and instead sought refuge in strict application of the Sessional Order.

This decision of the Minister for Local Government and Planning sits strangely with her Government that makes the claim of being open and accountable. The failure by the Minister to comply with the decision of the Committee raises real questions about her commitment, not only to the principle of openness and accountability, but also to compliance with the requirements of a Committee of this Parliament.

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**Howard Hobbs MP  
Shadow Minister for Local Government, Planning,  
Regional, Rural Communities and Trade,  
Member for Warrego.**

11th August 2003

## **STATEMENT OF RESERVATION**

### **ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E**

**Submitted by Mr Vince Lester MP  
Member for Keppel  
12 August 2003**

At the meeting of Estimates Committee E on 5 June 2003, it was determined that Minister's answers to Questions on Notice in relation to Estimates Committee E would be required to be returned to the Research Director by 3pm on Monday, 14 July 2003.

This decision of Estimates Committee C was made conscious of Sessional Order 26(3) which provides that "The Minister or Mr Speaker shall provide answers to questions referred to in (1) above, at least 24 hours prior to the hearing."

The decision of the Committee was made, notwithstanding the Sessional Order, in an endeavour to ensure that all Members of the Committee were provided with answers to Questions on Notice in order to enable adequate time for matters raised in such answers to be properly addressed. This request has been respected by Ministers of all political persuasions in previous years.

I further note that the Minister for Environment failed to comply with this decision and instead sought refuge in strict application of the Sessional Order.

This decision of Minister for Environment sits strangely with a Government that makes the claim of being open and accountable. The failure by the Minister to comply with the decision of the Committee raises real questions about his commitment, not only to the principle of openness and accountability, but also to compliance with the requirements of a Committee of this Parliament.

The Committee should have reservation regarding the role of the EPA in a number of major projects that are currently before Government. For instance, the SunAqua application, which is thought to have gross environmental impacts, is not being considered by the EPA. This raises the question as to the core business of the EPA and what role should it play in providing advice on significant developments such as the proposed fish farm.

The Committee should have reservations regarding the decision-making processes undertaken in the EPA and the Department's role in providing scientifically-based advice to Government. When questioned on the merits of the decision-making processes undertaken in the Bluewater development, the Minister for Environment acknowledged that *"you make the decision on the basis of the statute and science... then when that decision is made every decision can be reviewed on policy grounds"*. The Minister's admission that valid environmental concerns within the EPA were often ignored due to the Government's political ambitions has rendered the EPA a hamstrung department.

Reservation should be expressed regarding the significant reduction in regional vegetation mapping to be undertaken by EPA this year. According to figures provided during the Hearing, the total hectares mapped will be reduced from 12 million hectares last financial year to 10 million hectares this financial year. This equates to a reduction of expenditure from \$1.9 million down to \$1.7 million. The accuracy of vegetation mapping is of pivotal importance to landholders and should not be sacrificed to compensate for Government's budget woes.

The Committee should have reservation with regards to the funding of maintenance for national parks. The Minister for Environment outlined his plan for border-to-border marine parks, however, he admitted that the funding amounted to *"an amount in the recurrent budget and in the capital works budget which is not specifically earmarked for a particular part of a marine park but is earmarked for the administration of marine parks."* Budget allocations such as the one outlined by the Minister for Environment only serve to emphasize that this Government's commitment to our national parks estate is figurative at best.

[Original Signed]

**VINCE LESTER**  
**Shadow Minister for Seniors and Volunteers**  
**Shadow Minister assisting in Environment and Heritage**