



ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

2004

Report to the Legislative Assembly

1. Introduction

The Legislative Assembly appointed Estimates Committee D on 20 May 2004 to examine and report on the proposed expenditures contained in the *Appropriation Bill 2004*.

The Legislative Assembly appointed this committee to examine and report on the proposed expenditure for the organisational units within the portfolios of the:

- Minister for Transport and Main Roads;
- Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy; and
- Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women.

The committee conducted a public hearing on Tuesday 20 July 2004 to take evidence from these ministers. A verbatim transcript of the committee's hearing is available on the Internet at:

<http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Hansard/>

For the purposes of examining the proposed expenditure for the organisational units allocated to it, the committee considered information obtained at the public hearing with:

- Budget Papers and Ministerial Portfolio Statements (MPS);
- Ministers' written responses to the committee's questions on notice prior to the public hearing; and
- Written responses provided by the ministers to questions taken on notice at the public hearing.

Answers to the pre-hearing questions on notice and questions taken on notice at the hearing together with minutes of the committee's meetings are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

2. Minister for Transport and Main Roads

The Transport and Main Roads portfolio comprises the Department of Transport (Queensland Transport), the Department of Main Roads, government-owned corporations (GOCs), statutory authorities and other units that report to the Minister through these departments.

The estimated total operating budget of this portfolio is over \$4 billion. The appropriations provided to these departments in the *Appropriation Bill 2004* total over \$3.7 billion - over \$1.5 billion to Queensland Transport and over \$2.2 billion to the Department of Main Roads. Additional sources of revenue include user charges, Commonwealth revenue and other revenue.

2.1. Department of Transport

Queensland Transport is the principal organisation responsible for improving and overseeing land, air and sea transport environments in Queensland.

Queensland Transport's role includes policy and planning, managing access and use of the transport system and delivering co-ordinated and integrated transport-related services and infrastructure.

The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2004-05 compared to the previous financial year:

	2003-04 \$'000	2004-05 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	1,253,395	1,394,886
Equity Adjustment	19,599	89,370
Administered Items	731	97,070
Vote Total	1,273,725	1,581,326

Source: *State Budget 2004-2005 MPS – Minister for Transport and Main Roads, p. 1-7.*

Queensland Transport's projected outputs for 2004-2005 are as follows:

Departmental outputs	Total cost 2004-05 \$'000
Rail, Ports & Aviation Systems	509,123
Integrated Transport Planning	34,544
Road Use Management	215,568
Maritime Safety	93,851
Public Transport Services	851,605
Total	1,704,691

Source: *State Budget 2004-2005 MPS – Minister for Transport and Main Roads, p. 1-8.*

2.1.1. Budget highlights

The MPS lists the following budget highlights for 2004-2005:

- Continued implementation of all facets of TransLink, including integrated ticketing, coordinated services, standardised fares and concessions, network planning and Smartcard technology;
- Upgrade and improve regional bus services in Cairns, Townsville, Hervey Bay, Ipswich, Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast;
- Provide funding for several capital projects including the development of the Normanby Cycle link and the upgrading of the Boating Infrastructure programs; and
- Continue developing the New Queensland Driver Licence.

2.1.2. Issues considered by the committee

The committee considered a range of issues raised in the hearing, answers provided by the Minister to pre-hearing questions on notice and questions taken on notice at the hearing. These issues included:

- Safety of rail bridges;
- Government rail corridors;
- Redcliffe rail corridor study;
- Duplication of the main rail line between Landsborough and Nambour;
- MetTrip;
- Savannahlander tourist rail service;
- Safety of level crossings;
- Disused rail corridors;
- Public transport smart card technology;
- Sale of railway tickets on the north coast railway line;
- Translink ticketing;
- Translink stage 2;
- Investment in capital infrastructure for rail;
- Expenditure on transport infrastructure;
- Smart State Building Fund;
- Formal trial of drug impairment assessment guidelines by police;
- Safety of young novice drivers;
- Speed camera revenue;
- Inner Northern Busway;
- Rail freight reforms;
- Disposal of ship-based sewage;
- Road safety initiatives package;
- High productivity vehicle policy;
- Driver authorisation renewals;
- Regional passenger transport services;
- Efficiency of Queensland Transport operations;

- Safety of bus services;
- Transport corridors;
- Fees and charges;
- Queensland road rules guide;
- Queensland Transport customer service centres;
- Rental car fleets;
- International licences;
- Rail alignment from Robina to Coolangatta; and
- Public boating facilities.

2.2. Department of Main Roads

The Department of Main Roads manages state-controlled roads, the corridors involved in this structure and the operation and provision of projects for the improvement and preservation of this system.

The following table sets out the details of the appropriations for the Department of Main Roads:

	2003-04 \$'000	2004-05 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	1,914,621	2,143,890
Equity Adjustment	117,748	99,307
Administered Items	---	---
Vote Total	2,032,369	2,243,197

Source: State Budget 2004-2005 MPS – Minister for Transport and Main Roads, p. 2-6.

The Department of Main Roads' projected outputs for 2004-2005 are as follows:

Departmental outputs	Total cost 2004-05 \$'000
Road System Planning and Management	1,956,535 ¹
Road Corridor Planning and Management	16,880
Road Project Works (Rehabilitation)	---
Road Operation	32,887
Road Project Maintenance	236,840
Road System Access Funding	76,543
Total	2,319,685

Source: State Budget 2004-2005 MPS – Minister for Transport and Main Roads, p. 2-8.

2.2.1. Budget Highlights

Budget highlights, listed within the MPS, for 2004-2005 include:

- An extra \$186.3 million for the Roads Implementation Program;
- Providing \$120 million over four years for the first stage of the extension of the Centenary Highway linking Springfield to Ripley Road;
- Continue widening the Leichhardt Highway at Mooney and Taroom;
- Progressive implementation of the roads alliance; and
- Finalisation of a business case for a second Gateway Bridge river crossing.

¹ Includes equity return (\$1.141 billion), depreciation (\$515.6 million), and road asset write offs (\$142 million).

2.2.2. Issues considered by the committee

The committee considered a range of specific issues throughout the inquiry. These included:

- Funding for the Main Roads department;
- Internal audits conducted by the Department of Main Roads;
- Construction of sound barriers on Gympie Road;
- Companies awarded Main Roads contracts;
- Effect of increasing population;
- Arterial roads infrastructure package;
- Corduroy Creek to Banyan Creek section of the Bruce Highway;
- Protected road corridors and noisy roads;
- Duplication of the Maroochy River bridge and the Pacific Paradise interchange;
- Wages and conditions of workers employed by Main Roads contractors;
- Pacific Paradise road network study;
- Tugun bypass;
- Roads Implementation Program;
- Ipswich motorway;
- Road Project Works (Rehabilitation) output;
- Brisbane City Council's north-south tunnel project;
- Employment in rural communities;
- Auslink;
- Townsville port access road;
- Kuranda Range Road;

- Bridge information system;
- Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme;
- Peninsula Development Road;
- Funding of roads in the south-east corner;
- Caloundra Road;
- Moggill Road;
- Smart State Building Fund; and
- RoadTek.

3. Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy

The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy's vision is for Indigenous Queenslanders to have their cultures affirmed, heritage sustained and the same prospects for health, prosperity and quality of life as all Queenslanders.

The following table provides details about the appropriations for the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy:

	2003-04 \$'000	2004-05 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	70,851	33,967
Equity Adjustment	18,000	21,600
Administered Items	346	360
Vote Total	89,197	55,927

Source: State Budget 2004-2005 MPS – Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, p. 6.

The MPS provides the following output summary:

Departmental outputs	Total cost 2004-05 \$'000
Strategic Policy Advice	14,382
Community Development	40,350
Total	54,732

Source: State Budget 2004-2005 MPS – Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, p. 7.

3.1. Budget Highlights

- Funding for the \$55.4 million Reparations Offer will continue with \$20 million provided in 2004-2005;
- Improvement of community governance in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- Implementation of the strategic policy framework, Partnerships Queensland; and
- Facilitation of a formal review of the communities that have implemented an Alcohol Management Plan.

3.2. Issues considered by the committee

During the course of its inquiry the committee examined a range of issues including:

- Alcohol management plans;
- Tony Fitzgerald Cape York Justice Study;
- Townsville Happy Valley shelter;
- Community development grants;
- State government owned retail stores;
- Indigenous Community Volunteers program;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence;
- Regional homelessness blueprint;
- Audit of financial practices;
- Funding for Sorry Day;
- Heritage Trails Network at Laura;
- Strategic policy advice output;
- Meeting Challenges, Making Choices initiative;
- Wages and savings reparations process;
- Cape York Strategy Unit;
- Reconciliation; and
- Department policy.

4. Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women

The Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation is accountable to different ministers for the programs they administer.

The Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport is responsible for Sport and Recreation Queensland, the Queensland Academy of Sport and the Office of Urban Management.

The Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women is responsible for Local Government Services, Planning Services and the Office for Women.

Under the Sessional Orders this committee examined only those organisational units that report to the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women.

The Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation have an estimated budget of over \$417 million.

The following table outlines the appropriations for this department compared to the previous financial year:

	2003-04 \$'000	2004-05 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	182,864	403,104
Equity Adjustment	91	2,786
Administered Items	314,685	304,255
Vote Total	497,640	710,145

Source: State Budget 2004-2005 MPS – Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women, p. 8.

The following output summary is included in the MPS.²

Departmental outputs	Total cost 2004-05 \$'000
Advice and Services for Good Local Governance	8,774
Funding for Local Government Infrastructure and Facilities	218,338
Planning and Development Services	14,615
Services, Infrastructure and Facilities to Queensland – Sport and Recreation	164,924
Urban Management for South East Queensland	7,164
Policy Coordination and Services for Queensland Women	3,624
Total	417,439

Source: State Budget 2004-2005 MPS – Minister for Local Government, Planning and Women, p. 10.

4.1. Budget Highlights

- An additional \$3.6 million over the next four years to carry out regional plan implementation strategies;
- Assume portfolio responsibility for legislation governing the establishment and operation of Aboriginal and Island councils in 2004-2005;
- \$68.6 million to upgrade sewerage treatment plants in Brisbane, Toowoomba and Yeppoon; and
- Establishment of a taskforce to coordinate activities for the Centenary of Women's Suffrage.

4.2. Issues considered by the committee

The committee considered a range of issues including:

- State/local government protocol;
- New pool safety laws;
- Urban Drought Water Supply Task Force;
- Regional planning program;
- Regional planning advisory committees;
- Proposed Emerald Towers development in Brisbane;
- Grey water;
- Council of Australian Governments new water initiative;
- Grants and subsidy funding;
- Departmental resources;
- Council amalgamations;
- Budget accommodation buildings;
- IPA schemes;
- Aboriginal councils;
- Infrastructure grants to smaller and remote communities;
- Benefits of the 2004 state budget for women;
- Women's summits;
- Domestic violence;
- Commonwealth financial assistance grant;
- Building approval systems;

² Please note that some of these departmental outputs are accountable to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport.

- Delivery of essential environmental and health infrastructure needs for mainland Aboriginal communities;
- Safety of women in public places;
- Women's Infolink service;
- Rural Living Infrastructure Program;
- Local Government Grants Commission;
- Growth in the property and development market in Queensland;
- Office of Urban Management;
- Smaller Communities Assistance Program;
- Security Improvement Program;
- Recent local government elections;
- Rainwater tanks; and
- Centenary of women's suffrage.

5. Recommendation

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the *Appropriation Bill 2004* for the organisational units in the portfolios referred to Estimates Committee D for examination, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

6. Acknowledgements

The committee thanks Ministers and their staff for their cooperation and assistance during the estimates process.

Additionally, the committee acknowledges the assistance of the committee's secretariat and other officers and employees of the Parliamentary Service who contributed to the organisation of the estimates process.

Robert Poole MP
Chair
 17 August 2004

Committee Members

Mr Robert Poole MP (Chair)
 Mr Ted Malone MP (Deputy Chair)
 Ms Bonny Barry MP
 Mr Jason O'Brien MP
 Miss Fiona Simpson MP
 Mrs Christine Smith MP
 Mr Peter Wellington MP

Secretariat

Ms Lyndel Bates, Research Director³
 Ms Joanne Heidke, Executive Assistant

³ Mr Rob Hansen was the Acting Research Director while Ms Bates was on leave.

STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

Fiona Simpson MP

Shadow Minister for Transport and Main Roads

Shadow Minister for Urban Planning Infrastructure

Shadow Minister for Women

Member for Maroochydore

The process of Estimates Committee hearings in relation to the Ministerial Program Statement for the Department of Transport and Main Roads highlights yet again the weaknesses in the operations of Estimates Committees in Queensland as a mechanism for scrutinizing expenditures by government Departments.

These weaknesses include

- The limit on the number of Questions on Notice able to be asked as part of the Estimates process.
- The receipt of replies to such Questions on Notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual hearing meeting of the Committee.
- The limited time available for the conduct of hearings for each Department thus limiting the capacity of the Parliament to explore issues of concern to finality
- The limit on each questioning session generally to 20 minutes thus inhibiting the capacity to pursue issues of interest until finality is reached.
- The use by Ministers and Government Members of questions to provide a basis for propaganda statements rather than genuinely exploring issues relating to Departmental Expenditures.
- The failure of Ministerial Program Statements to contain comprehensive, consistent and readily understandable

performance standards that are consistently applied on a year by year basis.

- The Grouping of inappropriate activities in programs and subprograms that inhibit capacity to explore individual activities by government.
- The failure to permit statutorily independent officers and organizations to be directly responsible to and answer questions directly by Members of Parliament thus undermining their independence from Executive government.
- The use and placement of Departmental Displays behind Estimates Committees reflecting a lack of impartiality in Committee processes and a denial of the capacity of Non-government members to utilise similar opportunities

In addition to these general comments about the Estimates Committee process the hearings of Estimates Committee D on 20 July 2004 also highlighted the following matters on which the response of the Minister was unsatisfactory:

The refusal of the Minister to provide answers to Questions on notice as required by the sessional orders of the Parliament shows utter contempt for the Estimates Committee process and is yet another example of the failure of the Beattie Government to be open and accountable to the people of Queensland.

The Minister confirmed that despite a recommendation by the TravelSafe Committee in 1999 it still had not conducted a trial of drug impairment assessment by Police.

The Minister confirmed that the Department of Transport was now going to evaluate a proposal to utilise the standard gauge rail link through Beaudesert almost 12 months after the Opposition recommended exactly the same thing.

Despite delays in the implementation of legislation regarding ship based sewage Marine Safety Queensland admitted that there were commercial vessels still discharging raw sewage that have been given exemption from prosecution action apparently because there is not sufficient infrastructure for the legislation to be workable.

Despite recommendations by the Auditor General the Beattie government maintains its 'secret state' agenda in relation to programmes funded from Speed Camera revenue with the

Minister again refusing to detail which programmes receive funding from this revenue.

The Minister also revealed under questioning that the \$400,000 allocated from the Smart State Building Fund is to be paid back as a result of reforms to be implemented within the rail system but was unable to indicate any projections of the savings that are to be achieved as a result of these reforms so that the people of Queensland and in particular rail workers can have an appreciation of the impact of these as yet unspecified reforms.

Despite ongoing comments by the Government to the contrary the funding allocated for the Department of Main Roads represents a real reduction. The Minister admitted that although road funding had been increased by \$35 million the Department had actually underspent \$36 million last year meaning a net reduction in funding of \$1 million.

The Opposition was able to reveal that despite a Government attempt to mislead the Committee the operation of the internal audit unit of the Main Roads Department is dysfunctional at a time when the Department is under scrutiny for allegations of corruption and waste.

The Opposition drew to the Minister attention details of a contractor who after going into administration with considerable debt had their contract transferred to a related company 11 days later. This matter is under examination by the Minister.

Fiona Simpson MP
Member for Maroochydore

STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

Ted Malone MP

Shadow Minister for Local Government and Planning

Member for Mirani

The process of Estimates Committee hearings in relation to the Ministerial Program Statement for the Department of Local Government and Planning highlights yet again the weaknesses in the operations of Estimates Committees in Queensland as a mechanism for scrutinizing expenditures by government Departments.

These weaknesses include

- The limit on the number of Questions on Notice able to be asked as part of the Estimates process.
- The receipt of replies to such Questions on Notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual hearing meeting of the Committee.
- The limited time available for the conduct of hearings for each Department thus limiting the capacity of the Parliament to explore issues of concern to finality
- The limit on each questioning session generally to 20 minutes thus inhibiting the capacity to pursue issues of interest until finality is reached.
- The use by Ministers and Government Members of questions to provide a basis for propaganda statements rather than genuinely exploring issues relating to Departmental Expenditures.
- The failure of Ministerial Program Statements to contain comprehensive, consistent and readily understandable performance standards that are consistently applied on a year by year basis.
- The Grouping of inappropriate activities in programs and subprograms that inhibit capacity to explore individual activities by government.
- The failure to permit statutorily independent officers and organizations to be directly responsible to and answer questions directly by Members of Parliament thus undermining their independence from Executive government.
- The use and placement of Departmental Displays behind Estimates Committees reflecting a lack of impartiality in Committee processes and a denial of the capacity of Non-government members to utilise similar opportunities

In addition to these general comments about the Estimates Committee process the hearings of Estimates Committee D on 20 July 2004 also highlighted the following matters on which the response of the Minister was unsatisfactory:

- The disappointing and alarming lack of enforcement of the new pool fencing laws which are a joint responsibility of councils and State Government, but the Beattie Government appears to have the attitude that its responsibility ended when the laws were passed by Parliament. From the figures provided, the Gold Coast and Logan City Council's have not conducted any random swimming pool inspections since the laws came into effect last year and from a summary of responses of fifty local governments on the new laws, only six have implemented a random inspection program to date.
- The reluctance of the Minister to commit to extending the very successful Smaller Communities Assistance Program (SCAP) which has now been fully allocated, with the final approval funding for completed projects to be paid out in 2004-05. The Program is for communities with a population of less than 5,000 people and particularly targeted at subsidising water supply and sewerage infrastructure essential
- The cut in the budget allocation for 2004-05 for the Security Improvement Program, despite the Minister revealing that there was a growing interest from local governments in participating in the program, which provides a subsidy of up to 60% to local governments for works to improve public safety in existing public places.
- The failure of the Government to extend the use of greywater systems to householders in existing settled areas. Despite championing the use of greywater and its benefits for efficient water use, it was revealed that the focus is only going to be on new housing estates in the first instance due to cost. Furthermore, no commitment has been made at this stage to offer incentives to householders, such as a subsidy for installing a greywater system.
- A lack of research by the Government into the installation of rainwater tanks as another means of water efficiency for householders, in particular in the growth corridor from Brisbane to the Gold Coast where water reserves are extremely low.
- The failure of the Government to adhere to the State/Local Government Protocol signed in September last year, which was broken through the introduction of retrospective legislation into Parliament on its requirement to carry out regular valuations. These amendments were introduced without final consultation with local government.

Ted Malone MP
Shadow Minister for Local Government and Planning