



Estimates Committee G

2005

Report to the Legislative Assembly

Introduction

1. Pursuant to Standing Order 167(3) the Legislative Assembly, by Order made on 11 May 2005, referred to Estimates Committee G for investigation and report certain proposed expenditures contained in the *Appropriation Bill 2005*. The organisational units within the following portfolios were allocated to the committee:

Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development

Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women

Minister for Emergency Services.

2. A public hearing was held on 14 July 2005 to take oral evidence from the Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development, the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women, and the Minister for Emergency Services. A transcript of the committee's hearing can be accessed on the Parliament's Internet website at: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Hansard/>.
3. Prior to the public hearing, the committee put 20 questions on notice to each minister. Responses to all the questions were received.
4. The committee has considered the estimates referred to it by examining information contained in:
 - the Budget papers
 - answers to pre-hearing questions on notice
 - oral evidence taken at the hearing.
5. Answers to questions on notice, together with minutes of the committee's meetings, are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development

6. The Ministerial Portfolio Statement (MPS) states that the Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development has a broad mandate which includes a key role in developing a contemporary regulatory and legislative framework in the areas of fair trading, consumer affairs and the supply of liquor products with fair and equitable access to dispute resolution services. It also plays a strong role in encouraging responsible and sustainable expansion of the tourism, liquor and wine industries.
7. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2005-06 compared to the previous financial year.

	2004-05 \$'000	2005-06 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	40,078	42,569
Equity Adjustment	(1,073)	405
Administered Items	44,364	44,894
Vote Total	83,369	87,868

Source: 2005-06 Queensland State Budget, Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development, page 1-5.

8. The MPS provides the following output summary:

Output	Total cost 2005-06 \$'000
Fair Trading Services	35,161
Liquor Industry Services	12,251
Dispute Resolution Services	6,876
Total	54,288

Source: 2005-06 Queensland State Budget, Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development, page 1-6.

9. The MPS lists 2005-06 Budget highlights, including:

- Development of a new long term Queensland Tourism Strategy to provide a broad vision that will drive sustainable tourism development in Queensland over the next ten years.
- Implementation of the Queensland Wine Industry Development Strategy.
- Continued focus on liquor harm minimisation through the promotion of responsible hospitality practices and the implementation of various locally based initiatives to combat alcohol misuse and abuse.
- Implementation of a regulation and accreditation scheme for residential service operators providing meals or personal care services, and continued compliance monitoring of services and standards within this industry.

10. Issues canvassed at the hearing included:

- Departmental funding and staffing
- Staff training
- Legislative reform program
- Call centre services
- The transition of selected services to Smart Service Queensland
- Long term Queensland tourism strategy and support for the tourism industry
- Licensing arrangement for Sunlover Holidays and the Queensland Travel Centres
- Impact of commercial whaling on the sustainability of the whale watching industry
- Provision of consumer information and advice
- Consumer and financial literacy among young people
- Compliance with fair trading laws, and enforcement action
- Dispute resolution and mediation services, and redress obtained for consumers
- Brisbane exhibition compliance issues
- Alcohol management plans in Indigenous communities
- Liquor licence compliance and enforcement initiatives

- Regulation of live adult entertainment venues
- Liquor harm minimisation initiatives
- Special entertainment precincts and mixed use communities
- The Queensland Wine Industry Development Strategy.

Minister for Emergency Services

11. The MPS states that the Department of Emergency Services is a multi-service, community safety agency that delivers ambulance, fire, search, rescue, disaster management and hazardous materials services throughout Queensland, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

12. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2005-06 compared to the previous financial year.

	2004-05 \$'000	2005-06 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	358,008	347,899
Equity Adjustment	9,879	31,474
Vote Total	367,887	379,373

Source: 2005-06 Queensland State Budget, Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Minister for Emergency Services, page 8.

13. The MPS provides the following output summary:

Output	Total cost 2005-06 \$'000
Ambulance Service	313,275
Counter Disaster and Rescue Services	52,931
Fire and Rescue Service	301,258
Total	667,464

Source: 2005-06 Queensland State Budget, Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Minister for Emergency Services, page 8.

14. The MPS lists 2005-06 Budget highlights, including:

- Expansion of the Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy as an operational, multi-service and multi-agency training centre of excellence for emergency management and community safety.
- Strengthening of operational service delivery through: capital investment in fire stations, ambulance stations and vehicles;

additional paramedics to address growth in demand, maintain emergency response times and improve services to rural, isolated and remote communities; and upgrading the provision of aeromedical and air rescue services.

15. Issues canvassed at the hearing included:

- Staffing and funding issues
- Queensland Ambulance Service rosters
- Community ambulance cover
- Bushfire Prepared Communities initiative
- The Strategic Information Management initiative
- The Nambour Fire Station
- Proserpine fire and rescue services
- Deployment of Emergency Services personnel for overseas humanitarian mission
- Service provision in Indigenous communities
- Capital works projects
- Emergency Services response times
- Rural Appliance Modernisation Program
- Primary care paramedic initiative
- Emergency Services crewing levels, training and equipment
- Emergency Services helicopter and aeromedical operations
- Indemnity provided to Emergency Services volunteers
- Operation Safehome
- Counter-terrorism preparedness
- Emergency Services volunteers
- Bundaberg mass casualty response incident
- CPR for Life program
- Budget accommodation fire safety compliance
- Major hazard facilities regulation and compliance
- Geographical information systems.

Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women

Environmental Protection Agency

16. The Environmental Protection Agency is the Queensland Government's lead agency for

environmental protection and conservation management, and incorporates the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS).

17. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2005-06 compared to the previous financial year.

	2004-05 \$'000	2005-06 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	328,741	228,088
Equity Adjustment	(11,666)	(6,882)
Vote Total	317,075	221,206

Source: 2005-06 Queensland State Budget, Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women, page 1-4.

18. The MPS provides the following output summary:

Output	Total cost 2005-06 \$'000
Protecting Our Natural and Cultural Heritage	134,741
Promoting Sustainable Use of Our Natural Capital	87,546
Ensuring a Clean Environment	49,662
Total	271,949

Source: 2005-06 Queensland State Budget, Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women, page 1-5.

19. The MPS lists 2005-06 Budget highlights, including:

- An improved land management package for expanded QPWS Estate and enhanced management of additional protected areas on Cape York.
- Continue a project over five years to comprehensively identify Queensland's historical cultural heritage places.

20. Issues canvassed at the hearing included:

- Departmental staffing levels
- Grants and subsidies
- Feral pests in Carnarvon National Park
- Access to conservation areas by horse riders, and riding trail networks
- Cultural heritage review
- Koala Conservation and Management Program
- Conservation status of the platypus

- Environmental sustainability initiatives
- Storm and tidal inundation monitoring
- Development application approval process
- Fire management program
- Camping area visitation levels
- Departmental use of hybrid vehicles
- Mt Barney
- Review of chlorpyrifos pesticide use
- Review of environmental protection legislation
- HMAS Brisbane project
- Environment and tourism industry partnerships.

Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation

21. The Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation is accountable to different ministers for the programs administered. 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 Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women is responsible for programs administered by Local Government Services, Planning Services, Building Codes Queensland and the Office of Women.
22. Under Standing Order 167 this committee examined only those organisational units that report to the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women.
23. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2005-06 compared to the previous financial year.

	2004-05 \$'000	2005-06 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	403,104	498,686
Equity Adjustment	2,786	1,404
Administered Items	304,255	322,216
Vote Total	710,145	822,306

Source: 2005-06 Queensland State Budget, Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women, page 2-7.

24. The MPS provides the following output summary:

Output ¹	Total cost 2005-06 \$'000
Advice and Services for Good Local Governance	10,705
Funding for Local Government Infrastructure and Facilities	286,044
Planning and Development Services	18,419
Policy Coordination and Services for Queensland Women	3,756
Services, Infrastructure and Facilities to Queensland – Sport and Recreation	181,762
Urban Management for South East Queensland	6,785
Total	507,471

Source: 2005-06 Queensland State Budget, Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women, page 2-9.

25. The MPS lists 2005-06 Budget highlights, including:
- Development of an Electronic Development Assessment (eDA) online lodgement and tracking system for development applications with local governments and State agencies involved in the Integrated Development Assessment System (IDAS).
 - Expansion of the Indigenous Environmental Health Worker program.
 - Coordinating, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the *Women in the Smart State: Directions Statement 2003-2008* plan for women.
26. Issues canvassed at the hearing included:
- Initiatives in rural, remote and Indigenous communities to counter domestic violence against women
 - Maternity services
 - Swimming pool safety
 - Funding for training

¹ Some of these departmental outputs are accountable to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport.

- Initiatives to help build service capacity
- Programs promoting the anniversary of women's right to vote in Queensland
- Careers for women in local government
- Local government structural reform
- Local government boundaries
- Water re-use and recycling
- The Indigenous Environmental Health Worker program
- Grant and subsidy program application processes
- Indigenous environmental health infrastructure grants
- Council remuneration packages
- Impact of environmental legislation on Indigenous communities
- Building certification system
- Community Government Improvement Strategy
- Electronic development assessment, and related training initiatives
- Grey water
- Code of conduct for councillors
- The local government information management system.

Recommendation

27. The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the *Appropriation Bill 2005* for the organisational units and portfolios allocated to it, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

Acknowledgments

28. The committee thanks Ministers and departmental officers for their cooperation and assistance throughout the estimates process.

Robert Poole MP
Chair
 August 2005

Committee Members
 Mr Robert Poole MP (Chair)
 Mr Ted Malone MP (Deputy Chair)
 Mr Paul Hoolihan MP
 Mr Don Livingstone MP
 Mr Ian Rickuss MP
 Mrs Carryn Sullivan MP
 Mr Peter Wellington MP

Secretariat
 Ms Meg Hoban (Research Director)
 Ms Carolyn Heffernan (Executive Assistant)

STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development

**Ian Rickuss MP
Member for Lockyer**

The process of Estimates Committee hearings in relation to the Ministerial Portfolio Statement for the Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development portfolio 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 Portfolio Statements to contain comprehensive, consistent and readily understandable performance standards that are consistently applied on a year by year basis.

In addition to these general comments about the Estimates Committee process the hearings of Estimates Committee G, questioning by the Member for Beaudesert highlighted a number of matters on which the response of the Minister was unsatisfactory:

- The Minister's continued to seek the protection of the Chair to avoid questions regarding the role and performance of the Director-General, Ms Ringrose following reports that the Director-General had been referred by the Minister to the Public Service Commissioner on allegations of bullying. The Opposition believes that similar allegations regarding the Director-General's refusal to allow staff to talk to the Opposition, refusal to hold management meetings or to permit senior staff to have contact with the Minister must be answered. The Opposition is also concerned that the Minister has refused to address these serious allegations even though the Premier indicated in Estimates Committee A that he was willing to answer all questions.
- The failure of the Minister to adequately allocate resources for her department, instead requiring extensive use of the Director-General's Reserve to fund normal departmental expenditure, such as the Queensland Tourism Strategy. The transfer of this expenditure occurred only a few days after last years Estimates Committees. Of particular concern is the fact that the Wine Industry Development Strategy was funded from the Director-General's Reserve because there was no specific budget allocation for the portfolio.
- The failure of the Minister to increase the Government's commitment to supporting the tourism industry and her acceptance of continued tourism budget cuts by the Beattie Government.
- The failure of the Minister to provide sufficient resources and support to Indigenous communities who are struggling under alcohol management plans.

I trust that these concerns will be duly noted by the Committee.

Signed

Ian Rickuss MP
Member for Lockyer

STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G Emergency Services

**Ian Rickuss MP
Member for Lockyer**

The process of Estimates Committee hearings in relation to the Ministerial Portfolio Statement for the Department of Emergency Services 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 Portfolio Statements to contain comprehensive, consistent and readily understandable performance standards that are consistently applied on a year by year basis.

In addition to these general comments about the Estimates Committee process, questioning by the Member for Hinchinbrook highlighted a number of matters on which the response of the Minister was unsatisfactory during Estimates Committee G:

- The failure of the Minister to acknowledge the difficulties faced by ambulance officers as a result of roster reform and the inability of the Minister to provide details of those ambulance officers who have been disciplined for speaking out against the reforms.

- The failure of the Minister to acknowledge the difficulties faced by both permanent and auxiliary firefighters as a result of the Government's plan to use casual firefighters.
- Concern remains that high overtime and meal allowances in QFRS and QAS have been used as a justification to implement roster reform and casual firefighters without regard to the potential impact that these reforms may have.
- The standard and availability of training for auxiliary firefighters across Queensland remains an issue of concern.
- The failure of the Minister to recognise the need for improved fire services in Proserpine and upgrade the station to include permanent staff.
- The Minister's failure to acknowledge that additional funding is required to meet the needs of the department, despite his acknowledgement that staff satisfaction has been significantly impacted on due to increased demands.
- The failure of the Minister to acknowledge the potential difficulties that paramedics may face when working in a primary care role in a remote community and the Minister's contradiction of his earlier statement that this initiative could result in a reduction in paramedic numbers.

I trust that these matters of concern will be duly noted by the Committee.

Signed

Ian Rickuss MP
Member for Lockyer

STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G Environmental Protection Agency

**Ian Rickuss MP
Member for Lockyer**

The process of Estimates Committee hearings in relation to the Ministerial Portfolio Statement for the Environmental Protection Agency 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 Portfolio Statements to contain comprehensive, consistent and readily understandable performance standards that are consistently applied on a year by year basis.
- The Chair's decision to refuse legitimate questions which relate to specific outputs contained within the MPS and how they are administered.

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

- The Minister's decision to abolish funding for solar hot water rebates at a time when the Government is attempting to mandate alternative energy solutions.

- The failure of the Minister to commit additional funding to a range of green energy programs.
- The failure of the Minister to allocate reasonable funding to address burgeoning pest and weed problems in National Parks, in particular Carnarvon National Park.
- The failure of the Minister to provide safe and usable alternative trails for horseriders and expresses concern at her attempt to obfuscate the problems with the Noosa Trail Network by labelling it a “draft”.
- The failure of the Minister to allocate sufficient funding for the upgrade and maintenance of the alternative trail network.
- The Minister’s attempts to blame a decline in visitation numbers on bad weather despite an overall drop in visitors over the past 5 years fails to recognise that poor park maintenance is having an effect on public opinion.
- The failure of the Minister to encourage greater use of green energy cars within the senior executive.
- The failure of the Minister to recognise the incongruity in converting former ROSS land at Mt Barney into National Park.

I trust that these matters of concern will be duly noted by the Committee.

Signed

Ian Rickuss MP
Member for Lockyer

STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G

Ted Malone MP

Shadow Minister for Local Government and Planning

Member for Mirani

The process of Estimates Committee G Hearings on 14 July 2005 in relation to the Ministerial Program Statement for the Department of Local Government and Planning highlighted the following matters on which the response of the Minister was unsatisfactory:

- Despite acknowledging in last year's Estimates Hearings that more needed to be done by the Government to assist councils to have the knowledge and capacity to enforce the swimming pool safety laws, the Minister was forced to admit there is no specific funding provided in this years budget to train council inspectors. In addition to this, the Minister was unable to confirm how much funding had been budgeted specifically for educating pool owners, through community awareness programs. The Beattie Government appears to have the attitude that its responsibility ended when the laws were passed by Parliament and has again shifted the costs of enforcing legislation to local councils.
- The indecisiveness of the Minister on her government's intentions for the future of local government. It is very concerning that the Minister was unable to categorically rule out forced amalgamations by the State Government. This is the most critical issue currently facing local councils in Queensland and the Minister's comments do little to provide these councils with the certainty they need on the Government's intentions, and whether these decisions can be made by their local communities based on what's best for the local area.
- The Minister's failure to understand that the State Government's draconian *Vegetation Management Act* and the proposed Wild Rivers Legislation will impact tremendously and indiscriminately on Aboriginal and Islander communities' self-sustainability. Instead of dismissing concerns expressed by councils as merely '*imagining much worse limitation on their activities than is at all being even considered*', the Minister should be talking to all of these communities, after which she would understand that these laws, like the changes to managing vegetation will be detrimental to the future development of these communities.

Ted Malone MP

Shadow Minister for Local Government and Planning

4 August 2005