



ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

REPORT – 2006

1. INTRODUCTION

Estimates Committee E was appointed on 21 April 2006 to examine and report on the proposed expenditure set out in the *Appropriation Bill 2006* for the organisational units within the portfolios of:

- the Minister for Education and Minister for the Arts; and
- the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women.

The Committee conducted a public hearing on Tuesday 18 July 2006 to take evidence from these Ministers.

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

- budget papers including the relevant Ministerial Portfolio Statements;
- written responses provided by Ministers to questions on notice prior to the public hearing; and
- Ministers' written answers to questions taken on notice at the public hearing.

During its inquiry the Committee examined a wide range of issues, including those listed in this report.

Tabled with this report is a volume of additional information which includes the Ministers' answers to questions on notice asked before or during the public hearing, other material provided in response to a request by the Committee and the minutes of the Committee's meetings.

2. MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND MINISTER FOR THE ARTS

Introduction

The total appropriation for the Department of Education and the Arts for 2006-07 is \$6,007,794,000.

The Ministerial Portfolio Statement for the Department provides the following output summary for 2006-07:

Output	Total Cost \$'000
Early Phase of Learning	1,239,941
Middle Phase of Learning	1,989,156
Senior Phase of Learning	956,929
Students with Disabilities	458,420
Arts and Culture	72,472
Non-State Schools	2,645
Higher Education	5,181
Total	4,724,744

Source: Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Minister for Education and the Arts, 2006-07, page 1-16.

Issues considered by the Committee

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

- costs of and staffing and other resourcing for prep year classes;
- replacement of asbestos roofs in schools;
- the new literacy framework;
- school numbers and school closures;
- student numbers and retention rates
- student achievement benchmarks;
- new homework guidelines;
- student behaviour management, including the positive learning program;
- Queensland academies;
- school capital works;
- new private boarding scheme for geographically isolated high school students;
- school based apprenticeships and traineeships;
- support for Big Brother;
- the Millennium Arts project;
- support for local artists;
- Indigenous artists support; and
- support for cultural festivals and for youth arts.

3. MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, PLANNING AND WOMEN

3.1 Environmental Protection Agency

Introduction

The 2006-07 appropriation for the Environmental Protection Agency is \$265,062,000.

The Ministerial Portfolio Statement for the Agency provides the following output summary for 2006-07:

Output	Total Cost \$'000
Protecting Our Natural and Cultural Heritage	150,661
Promoting Sustainable Use of Our Natural Capital	93,170
Ensuring a Clean Environment	50,657
Total	294,488

Source: Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women, 2006-07, page 1-5.

Issues considered by the Committee

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

- environmental impacts of the proposed Traveston Crossing dam;
- new visitor facilities;
- resourcing for national parks; and
- research into possible chemical dispersal of flying foxes.

3.2 Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation

Introduction

The 2006-07 appropriation for the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation is \$876,802,000.¹

¹ This appropriation includes funding for Sport and Recreation Queensland and the Queensland Academy of Sport, which lie within the department. However, those entities report to the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and the Minister for Sport. Those areas were not examined by this Committee which examined only those organisational units that report to the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women.

The Ministerial Portfolio Statement for the Department provides the following output summary for 2006-07:

Output	Total Cost \$'000
Advice and Services for Good Local Governance	12,045
Funding for Local Government Infrastructure and Facilities	365,442
Planning and Development Services	21,744
Policy Coordination and Services for Queensland Women	4,436
Services, Infrastructure and Facilities to Queensland – Sport and Recreation	169,836
Total	573,503

Source: Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women, 2006-07, page 2-7.

Issues considered by the Committee

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

- funds for extension of maternity leave entitlements;
- financial training packages for women;
- horse trails;
- the Crime and Misconduct Commission inquiry into the Gold Coast City Council;
- Narangba Industrial Estate;
- local authority amalgamations;
- exercise of call-in powers,
- funding for Waterwise water usage reduction initiatives;
- support for Indigenous councils;
- local government governance; and
- integrated planning.

4. RECOMMENDATION

Estimates Committee E recommends that the proposed expenditures, as set out in the *Appropriation Bill 2006*, for the organisational units within the portfolios allocated to the Committee, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

Ronan Lee MP
Chair

31 July 2006

MEMBERS

Mr Ronan Lee MP (Chair)
Mr Stuart Copeland MP (Deputy Chair)
Ms Jan Jarratt MP
Mr Rob Messenger MP
Ms Cate Molloy MP
Mr Jim Pearce MP
Mr Peter Wellington MP

SECRETARIAT

Mr Stephen Finnimore, Research Director
Ms Andrea Musch, Executive Assistant
(until 9 June 2006)
Ms Jodie Martin, Executive Assistant
(from 13 June 2006)

The transcript of the Committee's public hearing is available on the Hansard web page at:

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

STATEMENT OF RESERVATION

I refer to the report of Estimates Committee E.

I would express the following general reservations in relation to the Estimates Committee process that led to that report:

- The whole Estimates Committee process does not enable the detailed scrutiny of the expenditures provided for in the Queensland budget
- The inappropriate grouping of Departments for each Estimates Committee limits the capacity to pursue whole of government issues
- Insufficient time is devoted by each Committee to the performance of its allocated task of reviewing expenditures
- Insufficient time is devoted by each Estimates Committee to the consideration of individual Ministerial Portfolio Statements
- The limit on the number of questions on notice able to be asked on each Ministerial Portfolio Statement prevents the pursuit of important issues
- The receipt of replies to questions on notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual commencement of Committee hearings limits the capacity to understand the answers and research their failure to provide adequate answers to the questions posed
- The structured nature of Committee proceedings into blocks of questions from Government and Non-Government Members which prevent Members being able to follow a line of questioning in a logical and consistent manner to finality
- The limiting of each block of questions to 20 to 30 minutes generally thus preventing detailed consideration of particular issues because of time constraints
- The break-up of time within particular Ministerial Portfolio Statements to particular areas of Departments of Agencies thus limiting consideration of particularly important elements of a particular Department or Agency
- The capacity of Ministers to answer questions in such a manner as to avoid the issue being investigated
- The inability of Estimates Committees to ask questions directly of senior public service administrators
- The use by Government Members of questions to Ministers that enable those Ministers to utilise the time of the Committee to make propaganda statements, grandstand and undertake media stunts instead of addressing issues in relation to proposed expenditures.

Whilst noting the report that has been prepared I would also express the following specific reservations in relation to that report:

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Prep Year

- The failure of the Minister to advise of the current total estimated cost of the implementation of Prep across Queensland
- The failure of the Minister to advise of the estimated staffing costs for teachers and teacher aides associated with the introduction of Prep in 2007
- The failure of the Minister to advise of the actual number of Prep classes required for 2007
- The failure of the Minister to advise how many schools will need additional Prep classrooms to those previously estimated

- The failure of the Minister to guarantee that the target size of 25 students will not be exceeded in any Prep year classes in 2007
- The failure of the Minister to advise how many full-time equivalent teacher aides will be needed to cover the amount of teacher aide time that has been allocated to Prep for next year
- The failure of the Minister to advise of the total number of hours that would be required to cover the full-time allocation of a teacher aide to every Prep class based on the estimated number of students expected to commence prep in 2007
- The failure of the Minister and his Department to prepare calculations of what it would cost or what hours would be required to provide a full-time teacher aide to every Prep class in 2007
- The failure of the Minister to address the concerns of parents, teachers and the greater community regarding the lack of teacher aide time that has been allocated to Prep
- The failure of the Minister to advise how many classes of Prep will be in facilities that are not planned to be the permanent facilities for these Prep classes

Safe and Supportive Schools

- The failure of the Minister to advise how many assaults have occurred in Queensland State Schools over the past 12 months
- The failure of the Department, acting under the responsibility of the Minister, to record sufficient details of all assaults that have occurred in Queensland State Schools
- The failure of the Minister to advise how many assaults have occurred in Queensland State Schools over the past 12 months involving a weapon of any sort and, if any weapon was involved, what type of weapon was used
- The failure of the Department, acting under the responsibility of the Minister, to record sufficient details of all assaults that have occurred in Queensland State Schools involving a weapon and the type of weapon used

Curriculum and Performance Measures

- The failure of the Minister to explain why Queensland State Schools have not achieved 10 out of 12 national academic benchmarks, those being year 2 reading, year 2 writing, year 2 numeracy, year 3 reading, year 5 writing, year 5 reading, year 5 numeracy, year 7 reading, year 7 writing and year 7 numeracy
- The failure of the Minister to advise of how the performance results of Queensland State Schools will be improved so that our children will receive an education on par with, or better than, the national benchmark
- The failure of the Minister to explain why Queensland State School retention rates have declined since the Beattie Government came to power in 1998
- The failure of the Minister to advise how the total number of students attending Queensland State Schools will be maintained

School Closures

- The failure of the Minister to advise why Queensland has experienced a decrease in the number of State Schools since the Beattie Government came to power in 1998
- The failure of the Minister to advise whether the introduction of Prep contributed to or influenced the threatened closure of the small primary schools currently 'on watch' in Queensland

MINISTER FOR THE ARTS

- The failure of the Minister to nominate and provide details of what assistance via a grant, loan or rebate was provided to Big Brother and all parties associated with Big Brother
- The failure of the Minister to provide a complete breakdown of amount of payroll tax holiday or rebate for Big Brother and deferred it to the Treasurer
- The failure of the Minister to provide information as to what the interest rate that the Big Brother Series had paid. The statement that it was half rates roughly of a commercial rate, did not answer the question and nor did the Minister clarify as to why they were entitled to such special treatment
- The inaction of the Minister to report on the review announced of the PFTC last month
- The inability of the Minister to provide clear guidelines in relation to the storage of Queensland Art Gallery works

I trust that these reservations will be noted.

Yours faithfully

STUART COPELAND MP

Member for Cunningham

Shadow Minister for Education and Shadow Minister for the Arts

STATEMENT OF RESERVATION

I refer to the report of Estimates Committee E.

I would express the following general reservations in relation to the Estimates Committee process that led to that report:

- The whole Estimates Committee process does not enable the detailed scrutiny of the expenditures provided for in the Queensland budget
- The inappropriate grouping of Departments for each Estimates Committee limits the capacity to pursue whole of government issues
- Insufficient time is devoted by each Committee to the performance of its allocated task of reviewing expenditures
- Insufficient time is devoted by each Estimates Committee to the consideration of individual Ministerial Portfolio Statements
- The limit on the number of questions on notice able to be asked on each Ministerial Portfolio Statement prevents the pursuit of important issues
- The receipt of replies to questions on notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual commencement of Committee hearings limits the capacity to understand the answers and research their failure to provide adequate answers to the questions posed.
- The capacity of Ministers to answer questions in such a manner as to avoid the issue being investigated
- The inability of Estimates Committees to ask questions directly of senior public service administrators
- The use by Government Members of questions to Ministers that enable those Ministers to utilise the time of the Committee to make propaganda statements, grandstand and undertake media stunts instead of addressing issues in relation to proposed expenditures.

Whilst noting the report that has been prepared I would also express the following specific reservations in relation to that report:

- An unusual situation occurred with the answer to question on notice No 7 where it was replaced after the deadline for receipt of answers to questions on notice.
- The Minister's inability to answer in-depth questions on "Ministerial call ins" was disappointing and further demonstrated how this process is being used for political purposes rather than to obtain good planning outcomes for the community.
- The Opposition also wishes to express its concern at the explanation given in relation to the contract awarded to UXC Ltd for the Home WaterWise Service and the fast tracking of this contract to UXC.
- In particular the Opposition would have appreciated more time to further explore the processes, procedures and advice with regard to the "Ministerial call in" process and the awarding of the contract to UXC to ensure that the processes maintain absolute transparency and taxpayers are receiving the best deal available for their investment. The Estimates hearings is one of the rare opportunities available for a full explanation of these issues in detail.

ROB MESSENGER MP

Member for Burnett

Shadow Minister for the Environment and Heritage