



# Estimates Committee B 2007

## Report to the Legislative Assembly

### Introduction

1. Estimates Committee B was appointed by the Legislative Assembly on 23 May 2007 to examine and report on the proposed expenditures contained in the *Appropriation Bill 2007* and the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2007*. In accordance with the sessional orders adopted by the Assembly, all organisational units within the portfolios of the Minister for Child Safety, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Police and Corrective Services were allocated to the committee.
2. A public hearing was held on 11 July 2007 to take oral evidence from the Minister for Child Safety, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. A verbatim transcript of the committee's hearing can be accessed on the Internet at:  
<http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Hansard/>
3. Prior to the public hearing, the committee put 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
  - documents tabled at the hearing
  - answers to questions taken on notice at the hearing
5. Answers to questions on notice, questions taken on notice at the hearing and documents tabled at the hearing together with minutes of the committee's meetings are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

### Minister for Child Safety

6. The Department of Child Safety is the lead agency for child protection and adoption services. During 2006-07 the department completed all 110 recommendations contained in the 2004 Crime and Misconduct Commission report – *Protecting Children: An Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Foster Care*.
7. The department contributes to the government's priorities of protecting our children, enhancing community safety, improving health care and strengthening services to the community.
8. Child Safety has three departmental outputs: Services for Children and Young People at Risk; Services for Children and Young People in Care; and Adoption Services.
9. Services for Children and Young People at Risk leads the provision of a range of services to enhance the safety of children and young people who have been harmed or are at risk of harm. The Service for Children and Young People in Care output leads the provision of a range of services to enhance the safety, education, health and other well-being needs of children in its care. Adoption Services is responsible for administering adoption legislation in Queensland.
10. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2007-08 compared to the previous financial year.

	2006-07 \$'000	2007-08 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	498,797	548,044
Equity Adjustment	33,873	24,845
Administered Items	0	0
<b>Vote Total</b>	<b>532,670</b>	<b>572,889</b>

Source: State Budget 2007-08, Minister for Child Safety Ministerial Portfolio Statement

11. The Department estimates it will have a total operating budget in 2007-08 of \$551.3 million
12. The estimated expenditure for departmental outputs in 2007-08 compared to estimated actual expenditure for the prior year is detailed in the following table.

Departmental Output	2006-07 Est Actual \$'000	2007-08 Estimate \$'000
Services for Children and Young People at Risk	140,749	150,798
Services for Children and Young People in Care	351,307	395,696
Adoption Services	4,664	4,766
<b>Total</b>	<b>496,720</b>	<b>551,260</b>

Source: State Budget 2007-08, Minister for Child Safety Ministerial Portfolio Statement

### Budget Highlights

13. Key priorities for 2007-08 include:
  - The employment of early childhood specialists to case manage the needs of high risk babies and toddlers
  - The employment of reunification specialists to review practices surrounding family reunification and to ensure appropriate decision-making about the safety of reunifying a child in care with their parents
  - The employment of permanency planning specialists who will work with the department to provide children in care with more permanent and stable placements when it has been assessed that they cannot be returned home safely.
  - Funding to establish and operate residential care facilities in the communities of Weipa/Napranum, Kowanyama, Pormpuraaw, Doomadgee and Aurukun.
  - Funding to establish and operate a First Placement House on Palm Island.
  - Funding to establish employee housing and office accommodation facilities for Child Safety Officers delivering services from branch offices located in Weipa, Cooktown and Thursday Island.

- Community engagement and consultation projects to scope the residential care needs of Mornington Island, the Torres Strait Islands and East Cape York communities.
- Provision of more therapeutic and behavioural support services to help children overcome the trauma of abuse.
- Funding to establish four therapeutic residential facilities throughout Queensland to provide specialist out-of-home care places for children and young people in care with complex to extreme needs.
- The creation of permanent record keeping officers.
- The appointment of additional Child Safety Support Officers and Child Safety Officers to assist with case work, family support and educating parents.
- The appointment of additional Court Coordinators who produce the necessary court documentation and coordinate court activities required when seeking a protective order for a child.
- The upgrading of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) coordinator positions to provide the level of expertise required and to ensure the department is appropriately represented in complex case discussions.

### Issues considered by the committee

14. Issues addressed at the hearing include:
  - Retirement of Robin Sullivan from the position of Director-General, Department of Child Safety.
  - Integrated Client Management System (ICMS) implementation.
  - Child Health passports.
  - Education support plans.
  - Children in out-of-home care placed in commercial accommodation.
  - One Chance at Childhood initiative.
  - Reasons for children being taken into care.
  - Babies being abandoned.
  - Indigenous children in the child protection system.
  - Therapeutic homes in regional and south-east Queensland.

- Early intervention.
- Notification when children are at risk of harm.
- Foster-carer audit team.
- Licensing of foster-carers.
- Services for abused children.
- Sibling foster care placements.
- Departmental complaints.
- Support for foster-carers.
- Departmental budget highlights.
- Ability to comment publicly about individual cases.
- Child protection concerns in remote indigenous communities.
- Staff surveys.
- Temporary contract staff.
- Training for Child Safety Officers.
- Opposition access to staff survey results.
- Staff workload pressures.
- Attracting staff to rural and remote areas.
- Services and initiatives in Redcliffe Electorate.
- Training and resources for foster-carers.
- Bravehearts.
- Indigenous staff scholarships and National Indigenous Cadet Project.
- ICMS useage.
- ICMS audit mechanisms.
- Staff recruitment.
- Investigation of complaints.
- Reviews of case management plans.
- Kinship carers.
- Staffing levels.
- Sexual abuse counselling available to children in care.
- Success stories for children in care.
- Review of care standards.
- Percentages of temporary staff.
- Adoption legislation review.

## Minister for Health

15. Queensland Health is committed to continually improving the health status of all Queenslanders by effectively and efficiently delivering a full range of health services that meet the needs of all Queenslanders.
16. The department provides five outputs: Treatment and Management – Acute Inpatient Services; Treatment and Management – Non-Inpatient Services; Integrated Mental Health Services; Health Maintenance Services; and Public Health Services.
17. The Treatment and Management – Acute Inpatient Services output provides hospital-based medical, surgical and obstetric treatment services. The Treatment and Management – Non-Inpatient Services output covers the provision of hospital-based emergency treatment on an outpatient basis, other outpatient services and community-based treatment support services. The Integrated Mental Health Services output encompasses the full continuum of care through the provision of inpatient, outpatient and community-based mental health treatment and support services. The Health Maintenance Services output provides dedicated residential aged care facilities and through community-based networks rehabilitation and home care services for frail older people and people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities. The Public Health Services output includes a range of services and programs which focus on protecting health, promoting health and well-being and preventing illness and injury.
18. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2007-08 compared to the previous financial year.

	2006-07 \$'000	2007-08 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	4,171,238	4,621,881
Equity Adjustment	289,192	222,226
Administered Items	3,220	14,775
<b>Vote Total</b>	<b>4,463,650</b>	<b>4,858,882</b>

Source: State Budget 2007-08, Minister for Health Ministerial Portfolio Statement

19. Queensland Health estimates it will have a total operating budget in 2007-08 of over \$7,151 million. The total appropriation provided in the Appropriation Bill 2007 is \$4,859 million. The remaining sources of revenue are user charges, grants and other contributions, other revenue and gains on sale/revaluation of property, plant and equipment and investments.
20. The estimated expenditure for departmental outputs in 2007-08 compared to estimated actual expenditure for the prior year is detailed in the following table.

Departmental Output	2006-07 Est Actual \$'000	2007-08 Estimate \$'000
Treatment and Management – Acute Inpatient Services	3,486,700	3,792,229
Treatment and Management – Non-Inpatient Services	1,582,106	1,719,805
Integrated Mental Health Services	589,498	670,393
Health Maintenance Services	510,332	568,757
Public Health Services	381,100	399,958
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,549,736</b>	<b>7,151,142</b>

Source: State Budget 2007-08, Minister for Health Ministerial Portfolio Statement

## Budget Highlights

21. Key priorities for 2007-08 include:

- Funding to support the recruitment and retention of the departmental workforce including meeting the costs of salaries and wages for the expanded clinical workforce, improving the quality of clinical education and training, and training enough doctors to cover areas of projected service demand.
- Funding to improve wages and conditions for clinical staff, including visiting medical officers, operational and administrative staff.
- Funding to enhance the clinical education and training of doctors, nurses and allied health professionals.
- Funding to create more positions for medical graduates to ensure an adequate supply of medical specialists.
- Funding to increase the department's capacity to provide high quality clinical education and training for increasing numbers of medical students graduating in Queensland.
- Funding to establish five additional rural generalist medical positions to increase the number of doctors in rural areas.
- Progression of the Gold Coast University, the Sunshine Coast and Queensland Children's Hospitals.
- Funding to progress projects including the North Lakes Health Precinct, the Browns Plains Health Precinct and the Thursday Island Chronic Disease Centre.
- Additional funding to acquire land at Nambour and renal service enhancements.
- Investment in e-Health initiatives.
- Funding to implement the *Queensland Mental Health Strategic Plan* currently being finalised.
- Funding to increase the capacity of the non-government sector to provide support and accommodation for mental health consumers in the community.
- Recruitment and accommodation of additional community mental health staff.
- Development and expansion of inpatient mental health bed capacity.
- Implementation of initiatives to develop the mental health workforce and improve service quality and safety in government and non-government sectors.
- Funding to improve mental health promotion, illness prevention and early intervention capacity.
- Funding to implement the recommendations of the Review of the *Mental Health Act 2000*.
- Development of a single State-wide mental health information system.
- Additional funding to meet the increasing cost of providing inter-facility transfers and aeromedical retrievals.

- Improvement of outpatient services including reducing waiting times for specialist outpatient services in Queensland public hospitals and investing in innovative and complementary models of care.
- Funding to improve neonatal intensive care services for seriously ill and premature babies in Queensland's public hospitals.
- Funding to enhance injury prevention and improve trauma management at a State-wide level.
- Funding to support initiatives to prevent youth substance misuse, including 'Ice'.
- Additional funding to meet the increasing costs of ensuring the safety and quality of blood and blood products.
- Implementation of final recommendations in the reform of forensic and scientific services, including the recruitment of additional staff in forensic pathology, toxicology and mortuary.
- Additional funding to develop, implement and manage a regulatory framework for recycled water.
- Additional funding to support the expanded school-based vaccination program, including vaccination against human papillomavirus (HPV) for teenage girls.
- Surgery Connect program.
- Elective surgery waiting lists.
- Artworks in Queensland Health Buildings.
- Litigation claims.
- Mental health acute in-patient stays.
- Emergency department capacity.
- Availability of acute hospital beds.
- Elective surgery outputs.
- Dedicated elective surgery centres.
- Operations and support for Bundaberg Base Hospital patients of Jayant Patel.
- Maternity services.
- New hospital at Yeppoon.
- Gold Coast Mental Health Unit.
- Extended treatment mental health patient transfers.
- Risk management strategies identified in the review of the *Mental Health Act 2000* and Butler Report.
- Employee classifications.
- Use of locum services.
- Office of Health Practitioner Registration Board licences.
- Queensland's tobacco laws.
- Bed capacity and infrastructure for in-patient mental health services.
- Access to community services for people with mental illness, their families and carers.
- Recruitment and retention of doctors in rural and remote communities.
- Public dental services.
- Health community councils.
- Capital works projects.
- Mammograms in younger women.
- Departmental coordination.
- Caboolture Hospital emergency department.
- Capital works delays.
- Coordination of health services across the New South Wales border.
- Healthy Kids Study.
- Queensland Needle and Syringe Program.
- Forensic and scientific services.

## Issues considered by the committee

### 22. Issues addressed at the hearing include:

- Doctor shortages and overseas trained doctors.
- Clinical education and training.
- Area health service budgets.
- Performance budget framework.
- Oral health services.
- Southern area emergency departments.
- Gold Coast Health Service District budget initiatives.
- Employment of doctors.
- Medical graduates' clinical training positions.
- Commonwealth funding.
- Identification of amphetamine use in the community.
- Elective surgery operations.

- Water and energy consumption and carbon emissions at Queensland Health facilities.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health initiatives.
- 13HEALTH 24-hour hotline.
- School based vaccination program.
- Nurse recruitment.
- Patient flow through hospitals.

## Minister for Police and Corrective Services

### Department of Corrective Services

23. Queensland Corrective Services is a strategic partner in criminal and social justice and plays a key role in contributing to the government priority of protecting our children and enhancing community safety. It achieves this through its principal activities of providing humane containment, supervision and interventions for offenders.
24. The department provides three outputs: Facility-based Containment Services; Community Supervision Services; and Correctional Intervention Services.
25. The Facility-based Containment Services output operates a secure and humane custodial environment that provides for the safety of the community, staff and prisoners. The Community Supervision Services output maintains a balance between public safety and the supervision of offenders in the community. The Correctional Intervention Services Output reduces re-offending by providing effective programs to assist in the rehabilitation of offenders.
26. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2007-08 compared to the previous financial year.

	2006-07 \$'000	2007-08 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	402,226	472,615
Equity Adjustment	195,373	202,482
Administered Items	0	0
<b>Vote Total</b>	<b>597,599</b>	<b>675,097</b>

Source: State Budget 2007-08, Minister for Police and Corrective Services Ministerial Portfolio Statement

27. Queensland Corrective Services estimates it will have a total operating budget in 2007-08 of \$487 million. The total appropriation provided in the Appropriation Bill 2007 is \$675 million.
28. The estimated expenditure for departmental outputs in 2007-08 compared to estimated actual expenditure for the prior year is detailed in the following table.

Departmental Output	2006-07 Est Actual \$'000	2007-08 Estimate \$'000
Facility-based Containment Services	308,054	351,728
Community Supervision Services	54,721	61,315
Correctional Intervention Services	61,043	73,975
<b>Total</b>	<b>423,818</b>	<b>487,018</b>

Source: State Budget 2007-08, Minister for Police and Corrective Services Ministerial Portfolio Statement

### Budget Highlights

29. Key priorities for 2007-08 include:
- Upgrade of the Townsville men's correctional centre.
  - Completion of construction of a women's facility in Townsville.
  - Expansion of Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre.
  - Redevelopment of the former Sir David Longland Correctional Centre.
  - Funding to enable planning and design for the expansion of the Lotus Glen Correctional Centre in Far North Queensland.
  - Funding for the planning and design of a correctional precinct in the Gatton district.
  - Upgrade of perimeter security at secure correctional centres.
  - Funding to continue strengthening the department's ability to supervise and manage sex offenders in the community.
  - Funding for electronic monitoring of sex offenders supervised under the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act.

- Additional funding for the implementation of Probation and Parole programs, for the progressive implementation of the 12-hour operational day to all secure correctional centres and for on-going external service provision to provide post-release support for prisoners transitioning into the community.
- Funding for a permanent Work Camp at Innisfail and a new Work Camp for low security female offenders at Bowen.

### Issues considered by the committee

30. Issues addressed at the hearing include:

- Assaults on prison officers.
- Electronic monitoring.
- Dog Squads.
- Random drug survey.
- Drugs in prisons.
- Escapes from secure custody.
- Industrial negotiations.
- Capital works expenditure.
- Manufacture of water tanks.
- Parole and probation staff.
- Community safety.
- Community supervision services.
- Pups in Prison program.
- Prisoner uniforms.
- Transitional arrangements for prisoners.
- Queensland Prison Officers Association.
- Supplies and services expenditure.
- Prisoners with complex needs.
- Incarceration of indigenous people.
- Videoconferencing.
- Length of sentences.
- New Corrective Services legislation.

### Queensland Police Service

31. The Queensland Police Service is committed to serving the people of Queensland by protecting life and property, preserving the peace, maintaining personal and community safety, preventing crime and upholding the law with due regard to the public good and the rights of the individual.
32. The department provides four outputs: Community Safety and Engagement; Crime Management; Traffic Management; and Professional Standards and Ethical Practice.
33. The Community Safety and Engagement Output covers activities directed towards preventing crime, engaging the community and providing policing services to preserve public safety and good order during civil emergencies and special events. The Crime Management output includes activities such as reactive policing, crime operations and criminal investigations. The Traffic Management output involves both proactive and reactive traffic policing operations and activities intended to prevent, or detect, motorists committing traffic offences. The Professional Standards and Ethical Practice output covers both pre-service and in-service training designed to establish and maintain a professional standard of policing.
34. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2007-08 compared to the previous financial year.

	2006-07 \$'000	2007-08 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	1,263,166	1,387,907
Equity Adjustment	121,495	158,159
Administered Items	391	405
<b>Vote Total</b>	<b>1,385,052</b>	<b>1,546,471</b>

Source: State Budget 2007-08, Minister for Police and Corrective Services Ministerial Portfolio Statement

35. The Queensland Police Service estimates it will have a total operating budget in 2007-08 of \$1,437 million. The total appropriation provided in the Appropriation Bill 2007 is \$1,546 million.
36. The estimated expenditure for departmental outputs in 2007-08 compared to estimated actual expenditure for the prior year is detailed in the following table.

<b>Departmental Output</b>	<b>2006-07 Est Actual \$'000</b>	<b>2007-08 Estimate \$'000</b>
Community Safety and Engagement	384,583	425,969
Crime Management	434,315	480,929
Traffic Management	268,125	297,926
Professional Standards and Ethical Practices	209,237	232,264
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,296,260</b>	<b>1,437,088</b>

*Source: State Budget 2007-08, Minister for Police and Corrective Services Ministerial Portfolio Statement*

### Budget Highlights

37. Key priorities for 2007-08 include:

- Creation of an additional 200 new sworn police positions.
- Funding to employ an additional 167 civilians to perform administrative and support functions currently undertaken by sworn police officers.
- Funding to continue implementing QPRIME.
- Continuation of the Public Safety Network project.
- Funding for the Minimum Nationwide Person Profile (MNPP).
- Establishment of a police contact centre.
- Acquisition and ongoing operation of an additional aircraft to enhance the provision of justice services throughout the Torres Strait.
- Funding for the installation and/or upgrade of CCTV in all public space areas of watchhouses in indigenous communities.

- Funding for the provision of residential police accommodation at Cooktown and Weipa.
- Upgrade of the Police Operations Centre/Major Incident Room.
- Funding to upgrade and enhance police communications equipment.
- Funding for the extension of non-camera enforcement and education and the camera detected offence program.

### Issues considered by the committee

38. Issues addressed at the hearing include:

- Police staffing.
- Incentives to work in remote communities.
- Assaults on police officers.
- Organised crime.
- Police numbers.
- Police in indigenous communities.
- Police contact centre.
- Police aircraft in the Torres Strait.
- Anti-hooping laws.
- Online auction fraud.
- Installation and/or upgrade of CCTV at police stations.
- Organised criminal groups and amphetamine usage.
- Queensland Bomb Squad.
- Police use of helicopters.
- Police vehicles.
- Queensland Police Service's capital investment plan.
- Digital photographic equipment for forensic and crime scene officers.
- Task Force Argos.
- Preparations for the APEC meetings.
- Trial of Tasers.
- QPRIME.

## Recommendation

39. The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the *Appropriation Bill 2007* for the organisational units in the portfolios referred to it, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

Phil Weightman MP  
Chair  
August 2007

### **Committee Members**

Mr Phil Weightman MP (Chair)  
Mrs Jann Stuckey MP (Deputy Chair)  
Mrs Betty Kiernan MP  
Mr John-Paul Langbroek MP  
Mr Rob Messenger MP  
Ms Barbara Stone MP  
Ms Lillian Van Litsenburg MP

### **Secretariat**

Ms Deborah Jeffrey (Research Director)  
Ms Tina Christy (Senior Research Officer)  
Ms Marilyn Freeman (Executive Assistant)



# **Estimates Committee B**

**2007**

## **Statements of Reservation**

Mr John-Paul Langbroek MP, Member for Surfers Paradise

Mrs Jann Stuckey MP, Member for Currumbin

Mr Rob Messenger MP, Member for Burnett

# **Statement of Reservation**

## ***Estimates Committee B***

**John-Paul Langbroek MP**

**Shadow Minister for Health**

### **Capital Works**

The Minister for Health, the Honourable Stephen Robertson, acknowledged there has been “a lack of proper and robust planning” of capital works projects under his predecessors within the Beattie Government<sup>1</sup>. The Minister’s frank admission supports the Queensland Coalition’s position, based on an assessment of current and historical spending as reported in the Ministerial Portfolio Statement, and is confirmation of the Auditor General’s findings in Report No 5 for 2006 – Performance Management Systems Audit of Capital Works at the Department of Health.

The Minister justified the cost blow-out of capital works projects by the purported expansion of the projects following a review of the capital works program at the commencement of his ministerial appointment to health<sup>2</sup>. The Minister indicated his department has “almost finalised that review”<sup>3</sup>. The Queensland Coalition has reservations about the tardiness of this review process.

While it is essential any capital expenditure on Property, Plant and Equipment is appropriate, such assessments should be made in a timelier manner, given that the majority of projects have been brought forward in successive budgets and investment has continued during this period.

The greatest concerns held by the Queensland Coalition, however, are the ‘assumptions’ upon which the Government has built the state’s health system<sup>4</sup>. In his response the Minister conceded past departmental research, planning and investment in capital works had been inadequate, whilst he commended himself for instigating the review, resulting in more tailored health facilities. The Queensland Coalition expects all projects undertaken across all portfolios be subject to extensive and rigorous research and planning in the first instance, thus precluding the need for further, costly appraisals.

### **Performance Budget Framework**

The aphorism has been readily incorporated into Government rhetoric on health but neither the Minister nor his Government have disclosed in detail the logistics of the new Performance Budget Framework and how it will improve health funding in Queensland. In his response to a question regarding the new funding model the Minister failed to explain the basis upon which funds would be appropriated on a facility level. The Minister asserts: “you do not construct a budget on the basis of individual budgets for individual facilities”<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Hansard, Estimates Committee B*, 11 July 2007 at 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Hansard, Estimates Committee B*, 11 July 2007 at 32.

However, this appears to be at odds with his Government's concept of an 'incentive' scheme, contained in the very title of the new model.

The Minister refused to contrast the current historical funding model with the Performance Budget as requested by the Queensland Coalition, aside from suggesting the design of successive budgets will differ from the current format. He stated the Performance Budget system would "better track the performance of various services", promote a "more transparent process of financial management", as well as foster the "further development of quality, safe and sustainable health services"<sup>6</sup>. However, the Minister failed to demonstrate how this will be achieved.

The Queensland Coalition is wary of any system which rewards hospitals and health facilities based on performance. Such 'incentive' schemes are often an indirect means of penalising hospitals which do not perform as well as other facilities or meet targets set by bureaucrats. Furthermore, passive punishment can breed anger and frustration among employees who are doing their best in difficult circumstances. Problems of ambulance ramping and bed block are the direct result of this Government's failure to sufficiently plan and provide for an increased population.

An appropriation model based on casemix as opposed to historical determinations *prima facie* is a positive move, and one which has long been advocated by the Queensland Coalition. Due care must be taken, however, to ensure individual hospital budgets are based on the needs of the community, rather than impractical surgery targets in order to avoid another Bundaberg.

I also note the error contained in the answer to Pre-Hearing Non-Government Question on Notice No 1 regarding area health service budgets. The Minister conceded an error in the fiscal information provided, which undervalued the Government's investment in health by billions. Whilst I am all too aware that such errors do on occasions occur, as the Minister conceitedly pointed out, with the resources his department commands I am surprised and rightly concerned such an imprudent error can be made.

### **Elective Surgery**

When pressed for detail regarding outsourced elective surgery the Minister failed to address questions in their entirety. The Minister was asked, on notice, to "supply detail of the amount expended in 2006/07 by each public hospital or district and overall by Queensland Health for outsourced elective and other medical procedures"<sup>7</sup>. The information contained in his response contained information regarding the Surgery Connect program only.

During the Estimates B Committee hearings Queensland Health's Executive Director of Reform and Development confirmed the Government's spending on outsourced operations exceeds that contained within Surgery Connect. The Minister confirmed: "there are other programs where we look at innovative ways to increase the throughput of elective surgery patients"<sup>8</sup>. The Minister and his department were unwilling to reveal additional information concerning these additional schemes, which appear to be centralised on the Gold Coast and Brisbane.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, at 32-33.

<sup>7</sup> Pre-Hearing Non Government Question on Notice No 4.

<sup>8</sup> Above, n5 at 39.

In his response to questions the Minister refused to disclose any substantial detail regarding the elective surgery objectives for 2007/08; instead making a series of vague statements about engaging more Visiting Medical Officers to carry out elective surgery procedures.

The Queensland Coalition is concerned that despite a series of alleged improvements to elective surgery programs, in addition to a lucrative investment in outsourcing procedures, these measures have not transpired into any significant improvement to elective surgery waiting lists.

### **Fit for Surgery**

The Queensland Coalition is concerned about Queensland Health's Fit for Surgery program under which patients are referred back to General Practitioners to discuss alternative treatment. The Minister denied that this practice in effect manipulated elective surgery waiting lists, which the Queensland Coalition rejects.

Denying any public patient admission on to a waiting list will obviously affect the quantum. The Minister justified the practice of refusing patients entry to a waiting list by suggesting it was in the patient's best interests based on their personal, controllable circumstances. The Queensland Coalition is mindful of the program's potential for abuse.

In circumstances where it is advisable patients should not undergo surgery based on assessment under the program, such reasons for excluding a patient should be detailed in writing in the reverse referral to prevent its misuse for the purpose of manufacturing more favourable waiting lists.

### **General Observations**

The Minister did not address the question regarding the cost of the stand-alone Office of the Medical Board, nor did he provide a breakdown of the mental health budget as requested.

On a final note I would like to note my concern about the decline in time allocated to health in Estimates Committee hearings. Last year, the Shadow Minister was afforded three hours and 35 minutes; the year before it was four hours and 10 minutes. This year the Committee had only three hours, half of which time was exhausted on Dorothy Dixier Government questions. Given this rare opportunity for the Government and Opposition to engage so extensively and candidly on portfolio issues, in future I propose more time is needed to address the unanswered questions Queenslanders have about their health system.

John-Paul Langbroek

**Queensland Coalition Shadow Health Minister**

**Member for Surfers Paradise**

# **Statement of Reservation**

## ***Estimates Committee B***

**Jann Stuckey MP**

**Shadow Minister for Child Safety**

Mr Phil Weightman MP  
Chair – Estimates Committee B  
Parliament House  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Weightman,

I refer to the report of Estimates Committee B. Firstly, I express my thanks for the extremely fair and even handed manner in which the Chair managed this Estimates Committee, and also to the research staff headed by Deborah Jeffrey.

As Deputy Chair I commend all the members of this committee for the manner in which they conducted themselves and the spirit of friendly co-operation. However, in presenting this Statement of Reservations I believe it important to address the following general conditions in relation to the Estimates Committee Process.

The initial rejection of the questions on notice I submitted severely limited ability to gain a true insight into the state of the portfolio and was not in accordance with the normal process which is applied in respect of Questions on Notice during Parliamentary sittings. Perhaps a review of Estimates Standing Orders is in order to address this discrepancy in the argument for fair discussion.

It was disappointing to have such strict limits placed on the information I was able to seek as it is important for this information to be made available in order to examine properly the details of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements. Excuses of workload created by questions on notice are lame when the Government is always spruiking about their superior computer systems and what they claim they can deliver.

With further respect to questions on notice I am obliged to raise my concerns about short time frames made available for review of the responses, particularly when some provide in-depth statistical detail. The disparity which exists between the time permitted for responses compared to the time for review of these responses is inexcusable.

Additionally, the questions asked by Government Members do not enhance interrogation of the expenditures provided for in the Queensland Budget, merely serving as time filling exercises to exhaust intense scrutiny by the Opposition.

I also contest the inability to question those senior public officials in attendance from the department directly, as I believe they are capable of providing responses to Members without having to go through the Minister.

With regard to specific reservations, I express the following concerns which have emanated from the responses from the submitted questions on notice and during the Estimates Committee hearing itself.

- It was disconcerting to hear from the Minister that Child Health Passports which were introduced January 2007 will not be provided for all children in care until 2010. It was found in the trial that 66 out of 70 children had serious health problems and yet despite these statistics the Government has failed to facilitate across the board implementation of this very important document.
- With regard to the extent of children placed in commercial accommodation the Minister stated she cannot guarantee a reduction, did not disclose the answer to the age of the youngest child in commercial accommodation and failed to give figures for those aged between 6 to 16.
- This Government has frequently boasted about the capabilities of its much heralded computer system, ICMS – Integrated Client Management System, yet despite 9 months of delays for its go-live there is still no guarantee release 3.1 will be ready by the end of July which will impact on the capacity of the Department to utilise full functionality of this system. The Minister has confessed the Government is not in a position to actually have accurate and up to date state-wide data on children in care and of great concern is that in some instances their system does not have the current location of children, nor can it provide whether siblings have been placed together.
- It became apparent that this Government is making policy on the run as the Minister admitted in response to my question about her Policy proposal re One Chance at Childhood that the ‘answer that is not quite certain yet’ but this Government is quite prepared to rush in and throw \$12m at an initiative which it clearly has not thought through. They cannot explain how this program will work, exactly where specialist staff will be placed and whether they will be shared between Child Safety Service centres.

Responses to other questions were deficient as follows

- Failing to recall signing a letter the day prior which raised allegations of DOCs staff attempting to intimidate notifiers raises more concerns about communication within the department
- By not considering aligning the licensing of foster carers to home based day care limits the Minister does not realise a need to look at whether we should set maximums
- No provision of current figures of children sexually abused whilst in care
- Lack of a list or statistics regarding the Department placing siblings together
- Using the excuse that temporary staff are experienced yet the reality is they do not have the accountability and long term familiarity which is often needed with cases.
- Questionable capacity to meet Specialist positions
- Admitted that not all case plan reviews were up to date which is a major procedural deficiency and highlights just how much work is still to be done in the Child Safety

Department in order to gain public confidence and erode the terrible images of past Departments.

- Kinship care in Queensland is at a low 28% when compared to 58% in NSW suggesting either flawed procedures or lack of follow through by staff to use kinship care as a first alternative.

Signed

Jann Stuckey MP  
Member for Currumbin  
Sadow Minister for Child Safety

# **Statement of Reservation**

## ***Estimates Committee B***

**Rob Messenger MP**

**Shadow Minister for Police and Corrective Services**

Mr Phil Weightman MP  
Chair  
Estimates Committee B

Dear Mr Weightman

I refer to the draft report for Estimates Committee B and submit a statement of reservations on the report and some general comments on the process of Estimates Committees hearings.

The Estimates Committee process this year again highlights the significant weaknesses in this process as a mechanism for proper scrutiny of the expenditures of Government Departments and agencies. In particular, I express the following general reservations in relation to the Estimates Committee Process:

- The entire structure of the whole Estimates Committee process does not allow detailed analysis of the expenditures provided for in the Queensland Budget;
- There is simply not enough time provided to enable proper and detailed consideration of individual Ministerial Program Statements given the number of programs and expenditure. An entire day per portfolio would still not provide sufficient time given the breadth of some portfolios.
- The limited number of Questions on Notice allowed to be asked on each Ministerial Program Statement prevents the pursuit of important issues.
- Receiving responses to Questions on Notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual commencement of Committee hearings severely limits the capacity to further research the completeness and accuracy of answers provided.
- In addition to limited time provided for questions, the avoidance tactics of Ministers who reply to questions in such a way as to evade the issue being scrutinised was a consistent theme throughout the hearings. Despite numerous follow up questions, Ministers either avoided answering questions or simply read prepared briefing notes of subjects not related to the issues raised in the questions.
- The structured nature of the Committee proceedings into blocks of questions with set times from Government and Non Government Members prevent Members being able to follow a line of questioning in a logical and consistent manner to finality.

- The inability of Estimates Committees to directly questions to Senior Public Service administrators.
- The pedantic nature of some Ministers in interpretation of standing orders to avoid scrutiny of the portfolio they represent.

### **Corrective Services and Police**

- The time allocated to properly examine the police budget of \$1.4 billion dollars is grossly inadequate.
- The number of questions allocated to the police portfolio meant an analysis of the expenditure and the items raised in the ministerial portfolio statement were inadequate.
- The inability to directly question the senior public servants responsible for managing both the police and corrective services portfolio meant no real scrutiny and accountability was achieved.
- The Estimates Committee was not given enough time to pursue, in detail, a line of questioning or make comments that may arise out of the Minister's reply. This includes appropriate interjections from the committee as well as sub-questioning, which is not limited by time.
- The deflection of questioning by the Minister and the deliberate interruption of questions with responses to previous questions or follow ups and then not answering the direct question being asked. This occurred within both the corrective services and policing components.
- The police portfolio lacked transparency, given that there are seven regional commands and a number of separate statewide commands, this budget breakdown is not provided in the portfolio statements and makes it difficult to properly assess the allocation of funding to particular areas and commands and again lacks any real accountability. This issue could be addressed if far more time was allocated to go through each of the particular areas of the police portfolio.
- The use of 'Dorothy Dixers' by government members of the committee makes a complete farce of the entire process, these questions in no way scrutinized the budget statement or documents and further added to the overall lack of accountability to the whole process.
- The removal of ministerial accountability and legalisation of lying in Estimates meant that the Police and Corrective Services Minister did not directly answer questions with regard to certain budget issues.
- The response to the questioning in regards to the Police Emergency Ordinance Response Unit showed no real transparency, the units' budget should have been produced and broken down. This was not done, instead the commissioner spoke off-the-cuff with no direct reference to that particular police sections budget.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the aforementioned issues.

Yours faithfully

Rob Messenger MP

Member for Burnett

Shadow Minister for Police & Corrective Services