



Estimates Committee D

2008

Report to the Legislative Assembly

Introduction

1. Estimates Committee D was appointed by the Legislative Assembly on Thursday 1 May 2008 to examine and report on the proposed expenditures contained in the *Appropriation Bill 2008* and the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2008*. In accordance with the sessional orders adopted by the Assembly, all organisational units within the portfolios of the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Women; the Minister for Tourism, Regional Development and Industry; and the Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Youth were allocated to the committee.
2. A public hearing was held on 18 July 2008 to take oral evidence from the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Women; the Minister for Tourism, Regional Development and Industry; and the Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Youth. 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 and Minister for Women

6. The Department of Child Safety is the lead agency for child protection and adoption services. In September 2007, responsibility for the Office for Women was transitioned to the department.
7. The department has four departmental outputs. Services for Children and Young People at Risk; Services for Children and Young People in Care; Adoption Services and Policy Coordination and Services for Queensland Women.
8. The Services for Children and Young People at Risk output leads the provision of a range of services designed to ensure 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 services designed to enhance the safety, education, health and other well-being needs of children in its care. The Adoption Services output is responsible for administering adoption legislation in Queensland. The Policy Coordination and Services for Queensland Women output delivers strategy and policy coordination advice to the government on issues affecting women with a view to improving the economic security, health and wellbeing of women in Queensland.

9. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2008-09 compared to the previous financial year:

	2007-08 \$'000	2008-09 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	548,044	589,202
Equity Adjustment	24,845	18,948
Administered Items	0	0
Vote Total	572,889	608,150

Source: Appropriation Bill 2008

10. The Department estimates it will have a total operating budget in 2008-09 of \$592.4 million.
11. The estimated expenditure for departmental outputs in 2008-09 compared to estimated actual expenditure for the prior year is detailed in the following table:

Departmental Output	2007-08 Est Actual \$'000	2008-09 Estimate \$'000
Services for Children and Young People at Risk	157,456	161,876
Services for Children and Young People in Care	398,728	419,503
Adoption Services	5,046	5,247
Policy Coordination and Services for Queensland Women	3,274	5,812
Less Surplus	(1,070)	0
Total	563,434	592,438

Source: 2008-09 Queensland State Budget - Service Delivery Statements – Department of Child Safety and Office for Women

Budget Highlights

12. Key priorities for 2008-09 include:

- Funding to provide additional front line staff (including rural and remote areas), additional Family Group Meeting Convenors and more specialist support staff for the One Chance at Childhood initiative.
- Funding for the construction of additional safe houses, additional 12 residential care facilities, enhancement of the Integrated Client Management System (ICMS) and other minor works.

- Additional funding to expand Family Intervention Services which provide critical support for families experiencing crisis.
- Additional funding for a major foster care recruitment campaign.
- Funding to improve and expand the options available for children with complex and extreme needs.
- The Office for Women will provide practical state-wide programs relating to issues where women still experience under-representation, inequity and need, including financial literacy courses for young and Indigenous women.

Issues considered by the committee

13. Issues addressed at the hearing include:

- Reduced child safety officer workloads
- Opening and upgrading of Child Safety Service Centres
- New types of foster carers
- Safe houses in indigenous communities
- Caring for children with special needs
- Cultural identity field in Integrated Client Management system (ICMS)
- Recruiting more carers
- Procedures for screening and training of foster-carers
- Abuse allegations against carers
- Substantiations and resubstantiations
- Long-term guardianship arrangements
- OneChance at Childhood program
- Use of emergency accommodation
- Cost of commercial accommodation for children in out-of-home care
- Services for indigenous communities
- Child Safety Service Centre Hubs
- Child protection
- Residential facilities for children and young people with complex needs and challenging behaviours
- Family intervention and prevention
- Success stories of children in care

- Reunification panels to make decisions about whether to return children to their parents' care
- Linkage between the demand for child protection services and substance (drug and alcohol) and other abuses (e.g. mental illness, domestic violence, sexual abuse)
- Government and community responsibility for the protection of children
- National child protection framework
- Warning signs of suspected child abuse
- Cultural and kinship procedures
- Draft *Indigenous Child Placement Principle Audit Report*
- Case planning and case plan reviews for children in care
- Community visitors role
- Indigenous Round Table meeting held in Cairns
- Indigenous children in the child protection system
- Foster-carer Audit Team
- Assessment and counselling of child sex abuse victims
- ACT (previously Abused Child Trust)
- Contraception for children in care
- Department participation in ClimateSmart 2050
- Professional qualifications required for specialist professional roles under the OneChance at Childhood Initiative
- Career progression for Child Safety staff
- Challenges faced by child protection staff in performing their roles
- Strengthening the workforce initiatives
- Staff retention and support strategies
- Attracting staff via the rural and remote incentives scheme
- Child Health Passports
- Education Support Plans for children in care
- Child deaths review
- Adoption and post adoption services

- Reform of the *Adoption of Children Act 1964* pre and post June 1991
- Transitioning care
- CREATE Foundation
- Safety of front line child protection staff
- Flexible work arrangements for staff

Minister for Tourism, Regional Development and Industry

14. The Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry facilitates the growth of existing businesses and targeted industries by building on regional strengths and supporting innovative projects.
15. In September 2007, responsibility for the tourism and wine industries were added to the portfolio.
16. The department has one departmental output entitled Industry and Regional Development. The role of the output is to broaden and strengthen Queensland's economic base and drive the implementation of the Smart State Agenda.
17. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2008-09 compared to the adjusted previous financial year:

	2007-08 \$'000	2008-09 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	218,871	217,011
Equity Adjustment	78,645	162,104
Administered Items	62,924	62,746
Vote Total	360,440	441,861

Source: Appropriation Bill 2008

18. In September 2007, the Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development was abolished. The following table sets out details of the ceased entity's appropriation for the 2007-08 financial year:

	2007-08 \$'000	2008-09 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	65,464	0
Equity Adjustment	738	0
Administered Items	49,788	0
Vote Total	115,990	0

Source: Appropriation Bill 2008

19. The Department estimates it will have a total controlled operating budget of \$225.4 million and a total administered budget of \$49.2million in 2008-09.
20. The estimated expenditure for departmental outputs in 2008-09 compared to estimated actual expenditure for the prior year is detailed in the following table:

Departmental Output	2007-08 Est Actual \$'000	2008-09 Estimate \$'000
Industry and Regional Development - controlled	205,463	225,457
Industry and Regional Development – administered	38,744	49,276
Tourism Queensland	66,120	63,498
Total	310,327	338,231

Source: 2008-09 Queensland State Budget - Service Delivery Statements – Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry

Budget Highlights

21. Key priorities for 2008-09 include:
- Implement sector action plans for tourism, wine, advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, therapeutic medicines and devices, processed foods, aviation, creative industries, alternative fuels, information and communication technology, environmental and mining technologies and services and marine industries.
 - Implement, in partnership with Tourism Queensland and industry, actions under the Queensland Tourism Strategy to progress the ongoing development of a strong and sustainable tourism industry in Queensland.
 - Release the review of the tourism network.
 - Prepare and release a five year Skilled and Business Migration Strategy.
 - Target investment in regional areas.

- Roll out the ‘Create It Make It Live It’ manufacturing careers campaign.
- Fund the Queensland Brain Institute to attract internationally regarded scientists.
- Facilitate a commercially viable scale-up manufacturing infrastructure for pharmaceuticals.
- Deliver biotechnology initiatives.
- Launch new ICT Strategy and Smart State Innovation Funds rounds.
- Develop a Tropical Science Strategy and a QTropics Action Agenda.
- Provide access to design expertise through The Design Integration Program to the manufacturing and business community.
- Attract new investment, expand business and build strength in regional economies, in collaboration with industry and local stakeholders.
- Deliver Regional Research and Development Forums within the Centres of Enterprise.
- Commence construction of the Health and Food Sciences Precincts.
- Prepare Queensland’s business, industry and regions to capture opportunities and address the risks arising from climate change.

Issues considered by the committee

22. Issues addressed at the hearing include:
- Biofuels
 - Budgets of the Department and Tourism Queensland
 - Flight services in Queensland
 - Tourism rescue package
 - Cape York and Torres Strait Tourism Action Plan
 - Torres Strait Islands’ cultural village concept
 - Indigenous business opportunities

- Aviation and aerospace industries
- Assistance to manufacturing firms
- Regional development key priorities
- Priority sectors for industry development in regional areas
- Finance One system upgrade for Tourism Queensland.
- Tourism Queensland's capital expenditure
- Ecotourism and Agnes Water sewerage ocean outfall
- Queensland tourism network review – Stafford Report
- Gold Coast Innovation Centre
- Staff recruitment and retention
- Science on Saturday program
- Boat building, marine and super-yacht industries
- Sale of Cairns and Mackay airports
- Charges at regional international airports
- Domestic and international marketing of Queensland
- Licensing arrangements between Tourism Queensland and Australian Outback Travel Group and Sunlover
- Invest Queensland
- Industrial biotechnology projects and biomedical research
- Nanotechnology
- Business and Industry Transformation Incentives Scheme
- Information and communication technology sector
- 'Tropical Expertise' opportunities
- Ecoscience and Health and Food Sciences precincts
- Strategies for domestic and international seniors tourism
- Small Business Field Officer Program
- Creative Industries strategies
- Attracting companies to Queensland
- Effect of adverse weather conditions on businesses
- Wine Industry Development Strategy

Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Seniors and Youth

The Department of Communities

23. The Department of Communities supports a wide range of services for children and families, young people, seniors, vulnerable groups and individuals experiencing difficulty. The department's statutory responsibilities include: directly delivered services (youth justice); regulatory enforcement (licensing child care services); and administering the domestic and family violence protection system. The department also leads Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy, engagement and service delivery coordination; leads multicultural policy and engagement with ethnic communities; and provides access to government services and information.
24. The department has eight departmental outputs:
 - *Support for communities and individuals* – services to Queenslanders that are vulnerable or experiencing difficulties;
 - *Support for young people* – supporting young people at risk to overcome challenges and adversity, providing young people with leadership and development opportunities, and ensuring young people who offend are held accountable for their actions and, where appropriate, diverted from the criminal justice system;
 - *Support for senior's participation* – promoting positive attitudes towards seniors, reducing social isolation and assisting seniors to broaden their social participation and improve their health and wellbeing;
 - *Support for children and their families* – facilitating quality child care services and promoting supportive communities for families and children;

- *Leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy, engagement and service delivery coordination* – working with indigenous communities, organisations and other government agencies to redress the gap in life outcomes and opportunities facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders;
- *Leadership in multicultural policy and engagement with ethnic communities* – providing advice and the coordination of multicultural policy across Queensland government;
- *Access to government services and information* – facilitating easier access to government information through the internet, telephone and face to face channels;
- *Information and communications technology shared services* – providing a host shared services arrangement with Disability Services Queensland and the Department of Child Safety.

25. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2008-09 compared to the previous financial year:

	2007-08 \$'000	2008-09 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	468,628	522,895
Equity Adjustment	71,244	88,457
Administered Items	149,841	281,068
Vote Total	689,713	892,420

Source: Appropriation Bill 2008

26. The Department estimates it will have a total operating budget in 2008-09 of \$663.7 million.

27. The estimated expenditure for departmental outputs in 2008-09 compared to estimated actual expenditure for the prior year is detailed in the following table:

Departmental Output	2007-08 Est Actual \$'000	2008-09 Estimate \$'000
Support for communities and individuals	175,292	194,347
Support for young people	150,459	164,612
Support for senior's participation	12,888	12,963
Support for children and their families	87,007	110,692
Leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy, engagement and services delivery coordination	45,338	75,769
Leadership in multicultural policy and engagement with ethnic communities	4,146	7,300
Access to government services and information	48,644	52,253
Information and communications technology shared services	38,155	45,744
Total	561,929	663,680

Source: 2008-09 Queensland State Budget - Service Delivery Statements – Department of Communities

Budget Highlights – Department of Communities

28. Key priorities for 2008-09 include:

- Funding to manage increased demand for youth justice services.
- Funding for implementation of early childhood education and care reforms.
- Funding for services to people experiencing homelessness.

- Funding to upgrade, repair and maintain community assets.
- Funding for the Safe Havens initiative to respond to the safety needs of children and young people affected by domestic and family violence in indigenous communities.
- Funding to raise the profile of multiculturalism through programs, events and activities.
- Funding for the Seniors Legal and Support Service pilot program.

Disability Services Queensland

29. Disability Services Queensland is responsible for policies, services and programs that support people with a disability, the elderly, people with a mental illness, their families and carers.

30. The department has four departmental outputs:

- *Accommodation support services* – provides accommodation to people with a disability and the support needed to enable a person with a disability to remain in their existing accommodation or to move to more suitable accommodation;
- *Community services* – provides services to enable people with a disability to live in and participate in their community and to gain and use their abilities to enjoy their full potential for social independence;
- *Respite services* – provides to families and voluntary care givers a short-term and time limited break from their primary care giving relationship with people with a disability;
- *Community and home care* – includes services provided under the auspice of the Home and Community Care Program (HACC) and non-clinical community mental health services provided primarily through non-government service providers.

31. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2008-09 compared to the previous financial year.

	2007-08 \$'000	2008-09 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	726,942	851,543
Equity Adjustment	39,171	41,165
Administered Items	0	0
Vote Total	766,113	892,708

Source: Appropriation Bill 2008

32. The Department estimates it will have a total operating budget in 2008-09 of \$1,234.5 million.

33. The estimated expenditure for departmental outputs in 2008-09 compared to estimated actual expenditure for the prior year is detailed in the following table.

Departmental Output	2007-08 Est Actual \$'000	2008-09 Estimate \$'000
Accommodation support services	364,422	430,462
Community services	274,789	324,586
Respite services	59,350	70,105
Community and home care	354,172	409,379
Total	1,052,733	1,234,532

Source: 2008-09 Queensland State Budget - Service Delivery Statements – Disability Services Queensland

Budget Highlights – Disability Services Queensland

34. Key priorities for 2008-09 include:

- Funding to deliver early intervention and prevention programs for people with a disability and their families.
- Funding to support people with a disability and their families who are experiencing emergency and crisis situations.

- Support people with a psychiatric disability to transition from the mental health acute and extended treatment facilities to sustainable community living.
- Deliver services for older parent carers.

Issues considered by the committee

35. Issues addressed at the hearing include:

- Ipswich centre of excellence
- Young offender Community Response Service and Bail Support Service
- Parenting program, reading to children program and health and wellbeing programs
- Early Years Education Centres
- Carer Business Discount Card
- Capital works program
- Redress scheme to acknowledge the impact of abuse of children in state institutions instigated by the Forde inquiry
- Child-care centre – fees, compliance and licencing
- Purchase of former preschool sites
- Youth justice including supervision and diversionary services
- Prevention and early intervention services
- Impact of flooding and equine influenza on communities
- Indigenous Queenslanders Foundation
- Support services for victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence
- Partnership service with the Animal Welfare League
- Promotion and raising the profile of multiculturalism
- Programs in place to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders fight HIV
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders diversionary centres
- Compliance requirements when holding public events
- Capital funding and expenditure
- Staffing numbers
- Leadership and development opportunities for young people
- Time for Grandparents program
- Accessing government information
- Support and development of volunteers
- Engagement and support of young indigenous leaders
- Response to volatile substance misuse
- Government campaigns
- Pensioner and seniors concessions
- Interpreter and translation services
- Supervision and diversionary services for people on youth justice orders
- Services for young people
- Homelessness initiatives
- Service and infrastructure delivery in indigenous communities
- DSQ funded lifestyle and respite service packages
- Staff redeployment
- Staff in accommodation services
- Expenditure on accommodation facilities at Brian Parker Place, Wacol and Basil Stafford villa.
- Positive Futures and Growing Stronger programs
- Support and services to Queenslanders with a disability
- Prevention and early intervention initiatives
- National Disability Services Agreement
- Safety of people with a disability in supported accommodation
- Progress on recommendations in Justice Carter's report
- Recognition of carers of people with disabilities
- Young disabled people in nursing homes
- Supporting older parents caring for persons with a disability

Recommendation

36. The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the *Appropriation Bill 2008* for the organisational units in the portfolios referred to it, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

Phil Weightman MP
Chair
August 2008

Committee Members

Mr Phil Weightman MP (Chair)
Mrs Jann Stuckey MP (Deputy Chair)
Ms Grace Grace MP
Mrs Rosemary Menkens MP
*Mr Rob Messenger MP (from 18 July 2008)
*Mrs Dolly Pratt MP (to 18 July 2008)
Mrs Dianne Reilly MP
Mrs Desley Scott MP

Secretariat

Ms Deborah Jeffrey (Research Director)
Mrs Helen Bogiatzis (Senior Research Officer)
Mrs Marilyn Freeman (Executive Assistant)

* Due to medical reasons Mrs Pratt was unable to continue on the committee. Mr Messenger was appointed to the committee to fill the vacancy from 18 July 2008.

Statement of Reservation

Estimates Committee D

Jann Stuckey MP

Shadow Minister for Child Safety & Women

Mr P Weightman MP
Chair – Estimates Committee D
Parliament House
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Weightman,

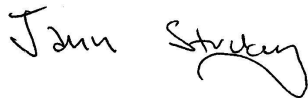
I refer to the draft report for Estimates Committee D and herewith submit my statement of reservation. At the outset may I express my appreciation to the Chair for his even handed approach as administrator of this committee and to Research Director, Ms Deborah Jeffrey.

This year has once again revealed considerable deficiencies in the Estimates Committee process that limits the effective scrutiny of the expenditures of Government Departments and agencies. I express the following general reservations with regards to the Estimates Committee Process:

- The current Estimates process stymies any deep analysis of the expenditures detailed in the Queensland Budget Statements.
- Limited time allocated to Question the Minister and her Department in session timetables prevents adequate analysis of individual portfolio expenditure.
- Tight restrictions on the amount of information sought via Questions on Notice prohibits proper scrutiny of budget items.
- Failure of Estimates Committees to allow direct questioning of Senior Public Service administrators also hinders the transparency of the process.
- Only receiving responses to Questions on Notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual commencement of Committee hearings severely inhibits the capacity to further research the subject or examine the accuracy of answers provided.
- Structured nature of the Committee proceedings into blocks of questions with set times from Government and Non-Government Members stops Members being able to follow a line of questioning in a logical and consistent manner to finality.
- Staged questions from Government Members waste time that would be better spent actually scrutinizing budgetary items. Listening to a Minister read from a prepared speech insults the Estimates process further.
- The integrity of the Estimates Committee process has been significantly compromised due to amendments made to the Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld) in June 2006, which abolished the crime of knowingly providing false evidence to the Legislative Assembly or a committee.

The following concerns hail from responses to Questions on Notice and Questions asked during the hearing itself.

- A glib response to Non Government Question On Notice No 6 which referred me to the 06-07 Performance Report highlighted the Minister's disregard for the seriousness of the issue. It is of major concern that the department has no idea whether foster carers have been charged with a criminal offence.
- On several occasions the Minister appeared clearly out of her depth and lacked thorough knowledge and understanding of her portfolio.
- Dated and incomplete figures were used to forward estimate the 2008/09 budget.
- Budget papers relating to expenditure for the Department of Child Safety were poorly itemized providing limited information to allow for satisfactory analysis.
- Inconsistent responses between the Minister, the Director General and other departmental officers, particularly in relation to the ICMS and reporting mechanisms did not offer any confidence in their capabilities.
- The Minister revealed a lack of consistency and adequate reporting within the Department of Child Safety.
- Health Passports and Education Support Plans are still not being conducted for all children in care and will not happen until 2010.
- The Department is not complying with its reporting requirements on indigenous child placement and is trying to whitewash an overdue Commission for Children and Young People and Child Report.



Jann Stuckey MP
Member for Currumbin
Shadow Minister for Child Safety and Women

Statement of Reservation

Estimates Committee D

Rosemary Menkens MP

Member for Burdekin

Shadow Minister for Communities, Disability Services, Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Youth

Mr Phil Weightman MP
Chair – Estimates Committee D
Parliament House
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Weightman

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

This year has once again shown major deficiencies in the Estimates Committee process that has limited the effective scrutiny of the expenditures of Government Departments and agencies. The following general reservations have been made by the Opposition over a period of time with regard to the Estimates Committee Process:

Regarding the portfolios scrutinised by the Committee, the following reservations are raised:

- The overall Estimates process has failed to allow for any real analysis of the expenditures detailed in the Queensland Budget Statements.
- The limited time available to scrutinise each of the portfolios and agencies outlined in session timetables fails to ensure adequate analysis of each portfolios expenditure.
- Reservations are held with regards to the limited number of Questions on Notice allowed for each portfolio, which limit the ability to examine in depth all areas of the allocated budget items.
- The failure of Estimates Committees to allow direct questioning of Senior Public Service administrators
- 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 on 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 integrity of the Estimates Committee process is grossly compromised due to amendments made to the Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld) in June 2006, which abolished the crime of knowingly providing false evidence to the Legislative Assembly or a committee.

Regarding the portfolios scrutinized by the Committee, the following reservations are made:

- In particular, the Minister failed to provide adequate answers to questions on massive underspends in capital works projects announced in the 2007-08 budget. With 60 per cent of the \$50 million capital works expenditure promised not delivered, the Minister was unable to provide an explanation other than bad weather and a good economy.
- The Minister could not provide an answer on budgeted expenditure to fix community assets that were in breach of legislative standards for Workplace Health and Safety.
- Also on Workplace Health and Safety, the Minister could not offer assurance that the massive capital underspend would not affect the safety of the department's projects
- On the subject of child care, the Minister was unable to state the criteria of compliance as relating to public holiday charging, nor could she supply the breaches of compliance that have occurred.
- The increasing impost of regulation on community groups, which is jeopardizing the viability of a number of community events, was dismissed by the Minister as something "all of these organisations have to learn to work together" to meet.
- Questions on staffing in the department were unsatisfactorily answered, with the Minister passing the questions on to the Director-General. The replies failed to address the specific concerns about the decreases in the service delivery staff for Communities and Individuals and Young People, apparently to accommodate an increase in the staffing of Access to Government services.
- Delays in recruitment for the Disability Services sector were dealt with in a similar broad brush answer that failed to address the concerns about service delivery.
- The Minister said there were not "any real reasons" for the decrease in senior and pensioner concessions for electricity, electricity life support and rates. No other information was forthcoming, despite the fact that pensioners and seniors are finding the cost of living a huge problem in the current economy.
- In the youth justice sector, the Minister could not provide a breakdown of expenditure on diversionary versus supervision for people on youth justice orders.
- In the disability services area, the Minister could again not account for massive capital underspending, in particular the targeted response capital expenditure falling \$5.4 million short of its promised \$5.8 million budget. The Minister could also not provide a list of new capital expenditure from the Budget, as opposed to reannouncements.
- The tendering process for the Wacol site for disability services was not illuminated in the Minister's response – she described the multi-million dollar tender as "just a normal process" but did not know the "exact dollar allocation".

- Overall, the committee was unable to learn any new information on a number of vitally important issues, even despite the Minister's admission that these decisions affected the most vulnerable people in the community.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosemary Menkens". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "R".

Rosemary Menkens MP
Member for Burdekin
Shadow Minister for Communities, Disability Services, Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Youth

Statement of Reservation

Estimates Committee D

Rob Messenger MP

Member for Burnett

Phil Weightman MP
Chair – Estimates Committee D
Parliament House
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Weightman,

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

In doing so I wish to firstly congratulate yourself, fellow committee members and parliamentary staff including, Ms Deborah Jeffrey, Mrs Helen Bogiatzis and Mrs Marilyn Freeman on the professional and courteous manner in which the hearings were conducted.

Your personal leadership of the committee also helped created a congenial and respectful environment, which helped our attempt to hold this government to account for the expenditure of over \$1.7B of Queensland taxpayer funds.

However this year has once again shown major political structural deficiencies in the Estimates Committee process that has limited the effective scrutiny of the expenditures of Government Departments and agencies.

It's interesting to note that in the case of Committee D, the estimated expenditure of over \$1.7B in tax payers funds was only examined by 65 questions from the opposition making for an average of approximately \$26,153,846 per question.

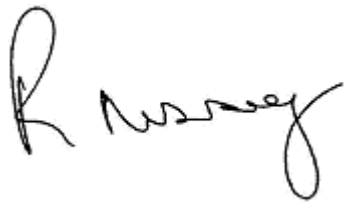
The above statistic only highlights the political structural inadequacies and lack of real accountability, which has been deliberately built into the current Estimates Committee system and makes the reintroduction of an upper house of review a more attractive and a "better value for money" political option for QLD voters who appreciate rigorous accountability and transparency in their government decision-making process.

The following general reservations are held with regards to the Estimates Committee Process:

Regarding the portfolios scrutinised by the Committee, the following reservations are raised:

- The overall Estimates process has failed to allow for any real analysis of the expenditures detailed in the Queensland Budget Statements.
- The limited time available to scrutinise each of the portfolios and agencies outlined in session timetables fails to ensure adequate analysis of each portfolios expenditure.
- Reservations are held with regards to the limited number of Questions on Notice allowed for each portfolio, which limit the ability to examine in depth all areas of the allocated budget items.

- The failure of Estimates Committees to allow direct questioning of Senior Public Service administrators as is the case in federal parliament.
- Receiving responses to Questions on Notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual commencement of Committee hearings greatly inhibits 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 on 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 integrity of the Estimates Committee process is grossly compromised due to amendments made to the Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld) in June 2006, which abolished the crime of knowingly providing false evidence to the Legislative Assembly or a committee.

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Rob Messenger MP
Member for Burnett