



Estimates Committee E

2009

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Introduction

On 3 June 2009, the Legislative Assembly referred to Estimates Committee E the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2009 for the following portfolios for examination and report:

- The Attorney General and Minister for Industrial Relations;
- The Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland; and
- The Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability.

The committee questioned the ministers about their portfolio budgets at a public hearing at Parliament House on 21 July 2009. This was in addition to written questions the committee put to the ministers prior to the hearing in accordance with the Standing Orders. A transcript of the hearing is available from the Parliament's website at: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/view/committees/EC.asp>

This report summarises the estimates referred to the committee and highlights some of the issues the committee examined. The report also makes a recommendation to the Legislative Assembly. Ministers' answers to the committee's pre-hearing questions, documents tabled during the hearing, answers provided by ministers after the hearing and minutes of the committee's private meetings are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

Portfolio of the Attorney General and Minister for Industrial Relations

The Minister's portfolio comprises the following organisational units:

- Department of Justice and Attorney General;
- Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland;
- Crime and Misconduct Commission;
- Legal Aid Queensland;
- Office of the Information Commissioner;
- Electoral Commission of Queensland;
- Office of the Ombudsman;
- Public Trust Office.

Department of Justice and Attorney General

The Department of Justice and Attorney General provides a range of services to Queensland including:

- Courts and tribunals;
- Legal and advocacy services;
- Community programs aimed at assisting vulnerable people; and
- The improvement of the productivity, equity and safety of Queensland's workplaces.

Budgeted capital expenditure, including statutory bodies, for 2009-10 is \$212.3 million.¹

The following table compares the appropriations for the department for 2008-09 and 2009-10.

Appropriations	2008-09 \$'000	2009-10 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
Departmental Services	317,351	356,927
Equity Adjustment	294,058	179,407
<i>Administered Items</i>	142,058	198,477
Vote	753,467	734,811

Source: Appropriation Bill 2009, p. 10.

The following is a summary of the output costs for 2009-10.

2009-10 Output Summary	\$'000
Justice and Attorney General	
Court and Tribunal Services	234,819
Policy, Legislation and Legal Services	42,282
Community Justice Services	43,544
Human Rights Protection Services	21,111
Industrial Relations	
Private Sector Industrial Relations Services	23,532
Administration of the Industrial Court and Commission System	6,634
Public Sector Industrial and Employee Relations	4,584
Workplace Health and Safety Services	75,264
Electrical Safety Services	14,942
Total	466,712

Source: State Budget 2009-10 Service Delivery Statements Book 1, p. 1-168.

¹ State Budget 2009-10 Capital Statement – Budget Paper No.3, p. 95.

Priorities highlighted in the SDS for 2009-10 include:

- Increased operational funding of \$2.8 million and capital funding of \$580,000 is provided to implement the new Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT);
- The Victims Financial Assistance and Service Scheme (VFASS) will commence on 1 December 2009 to provide Government coordination of information, training and policy development to improve access to services and financial assistance for victims of crime;
- Increased funding of \$700,000 in 2009-10 (with \$1.4 million ongoing) to permanently employ judicial registrars following an evaluation of a two year pilot;
- The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) is provided with additional funding of \$1.9 million in 2009-10, as part of \$20.8 million over the next five years; and
- Increased funding for workplace safety measures, relating to the monitoring of 34 major hazard facilities regulated by the Queensland Government across the state.

Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland

The principal role of the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland is the promotion of human rights through complaint resolution and determination as well as community education. Estimated expenditure for 2009-10 is \$5.192 million.²

Priorities highlighted in the SDS for 2009-10 include:

- The implementation of a system for the electronic lodgement of complaints;
- The implementation of a new case management database system; and
- Hosting the National Human Rights Legal / Conciliation / Education Conference.

Crime and Misconduct Commission

The Crime and Misconduct Commission's core functions are to combat and prevent major crime, provide Queensland's witness protection service and strengthen integrity in public sector institutions, through investigations and the provision of complaints-handling and prevention services. Estimated expenditure for 2009-10 is \$43.272 million.³

Legal Aid Queensland

Legal Aid Queensland is an independent statutory authority, which provides legal help to financially disadvantaged Queenslanders. Estimated expenditure for 2009-10 is \$112.279 million.⁴

Priorities highlighted in the SDS for 2009-10 include:

- Continuing work to achieve criminal justice system reforms that lead to efficiencies for the justice system; and
- Supporting the expanded Special Circumstances Court operations in the Brisbane Magistrates Court.

Office of the Information Commissioner

The core function of the Office of the Information Commissioner is to foster openness and accountability in public agencies and authorities through the independent review of decisions made under the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*. Estimated expenditure for 2009-10 is \$6.667 million.⁵

Priorities highlighted in the SDS include:

- The completion of the Right to Information project, and performance of new roles, including Privacy Commissioner Queensland and champion for awareness and compliance with legislation;
- Continuing to improve quality and timeliness in conducting external reviews by enhancing both case and knowledge management systems; and
- Implementing a change management strategy to ensure its capability to undertake new roles.

Electoral Commission of Queensland

The Electoral Commission Queensland (ECQ) is an independent statutory authority established under the *Electoral Act 1992*. Its primary functions are to administer and conduct free and democratic elections, manage the electoral boundary review process and promote informed participation in Queensland elections.

The following table compares the appropriations for the ECQ for 2008-09 and 2009-10.

² State Budget 2009-10 Service Delivery Statements Book 1, p. 1-206.

³ State Budget 2009-10 Service Delivery Statements Book 1, p. 1-212.

⁴ State Budget 2009-10 Service Delivery Statements Book 1, p. 1-218.

⁵ State Budget 2009-10 Service Delivery Statements Book 1, p. 1-224.

Appropriations	2008-09 \$'000	2009-10 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
Departmental Services	11,374	9,497
Equity Adjustment	(76)	(76)
<i>Administered Items</i>	-	-
Vote	11,298	9,421

Source: Appropriation Bill 2009, p. 11.

Budgeted capital expenditure for 2009-10 is \$40,000.⁶

Priorities highlighted in the SDS include:

- Finalising the post election process for the 2009 State general election;
- Continued delivery of a Community Awareness Program; and
- Continued planning and preparation for future parliamentary and local government elections.

Office of the Ombudsman

The statutory role of the Office of the Ombudsman is to investigate administrative actions of agencies and to assist agencies to improve their practices and procedures.

The following table compares the appropriations for the Office of the Ombudsman for 2008-09 and 2009-10.

Appropriations	2008-09 \$'000	2009-10 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
Departmental Services	6,709	6,591
Equity Adjustment	300	-
<i>Administered Items</i>	-	-
Vote	7,009	6,591

Source: Appropriation Bill 2009, p. 11.

Budgeted capital expenditure for 2009-10 is \$80,000.⁷

Priorities highlighted in the SDS include:

- Office relocation to achieve efficiencies by sharing resources with other independent Government agencies;
- Changes in the corrections programs; and
- Continuing to deliver training programs on decision making and complaint handling.

Public Trust Office

The Public Trust Office supports the Public Trustee of Queensland in carrying out functions for the Queensland Government including:

- Administering deceased estates and trusts;
- Acting as trustee of philanthropic trusts, such as the Queensland Community Foundation; and
- Providing community service obligations, such as managing the financial affairs of people with decision-making disabilities.

Issues raised at the public hearing

Issues the committee raised with the Minister at the public hearing on 21 July 2009 include:

- Public interest and Supreme Court appeals against lenient sentences;
- Matters relating to the prosecution of former Minister Nuttall;
- The Government's response to the Moynihan Report's review of criminal and civil court processes;
- The State Penalties Enforcement Registry and measures taken to ensure that offenders pay their fines;
- Construction progress in relation to the new Supreme and District Courts in the Brisbane CBD and measures taken to ensure the buildings are environmentally sustainable;
- The effect of the funding boost for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions on Queensland's prosecution service;
- Matters relating to the Victims Financial Assistance and Services Scheme;
- Progress in implementing the new arrangements within the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal;
- Matters relating to the Crime and Misconduct Commission's witness protection program;
- Issues relating to the Queensland Electoral Commission's compliance with election guidelines;
- Programs, provided by Legal Aid Queensland, for rural and regional Queensland;
- Funding for homeless court initiatives, including the special circumstances program;
- The introduction of Victim LinkUp within the Victim Assistance Unit;
- Initiatives to assist in the process of neighbourly disputes;

⁶ State Budget 2009-10 Capital Statement – Budget Paper No.3, p. 55.

⁷ State Budget 2009-10 Capital Statement – Budget Paper No.3, p. 101.

- The digitisation of the Births, Deaths and Marriages archive;
- Industrial inspections and non-compliance notices in public sector workplaces in the past 12 months;
- The amount and cost benefit analysis of payments made to employee industrial entities over the past 12 months;
- Issues relating to the transfer of industrial relations matters to the federal industrial relations system;
- Government support and assistance to the employees of government-owned assets due to be sold;
- The Government's new wage policy;
- The prosecution of work safety breaches; and
- Government actions to improve scaffolding safety on high-rise constructions.

Portfolio of the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland

The Minister's portfolio comprises the following organisational units from Queensland Primary Industry and Fisheries (QPIF), within the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI):

- Primary Industries Development;
- Biosecurity;
- Fisheries; and
- Rural and Regional Communities Services.

Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation

The Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI), created in March 2009, is responsible for administering the core functions of employment, industry development, trade, mining and resources, energy, primary resources, fisheries, fair trading, liquor licensing, gaming and racing, tourism, rural and regional development, and innovation.

The following table compares the budget allocations for the portfolio of the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Communities for 2008-09 and 2009-10.

Budget Allocations	2008-09 \$'000	2009-10 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
State Contribution	267,199	263,382
Equity Adjustment	900	10,852
<i>Administered Items</i>	24,056	24,195
Total Budget Allocation	292,155	298,429

Source: Departmental advice on the breakdown of appropriations for the Minister's portfolio within DEEDI.

Note: The Output Summary (below) is calculated on additional items not included in the Budget Allocation table above.

The following is a summary of the estimated output costs for QPIF in 2009-10.

2009-10 Output Summary	\$'000
Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Communities	
Primary Industries Development	204,136
Biosecurity	76,025
Fisheries	47,380
Rural and Regional Communities Services	7,949
Total	335,490

Source: State Budget 2009-10 Service Delivery Statements Book 2, p. 2-19.

Budgeted capital expenditure for QPIF is \$ 33.4 million.⁸

Priorities highlighted in the SDS for QPIF in 2009-10 include:

- Investing in a range of services to assist Queensland's agricultural industries to remain viable and competitive in the current economic climate, and enhance job-creation in rural and regional Queensland;
- Strengthening and expanding agribusiness workforce skilling and training in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training to expand the *Gateway Schools* initiative;
- Networking and modernising service delivery by upgrading QPIF's IT platform to make QPIF's services integrated, modern and user-friendly;
- Capitalising on R&D potential to foster world-class innovation by planning the establishment of a new bio-security laboratory facility at James Cook University in Townsville; and
- Delivering infrastructure to support the *Fresh Approach* initiative.

⁸ State Budget 2009-10 Capital Statement – Budget Paper No.3, p. 56.

Primary Industries Development

The Primary Industry Development output is focused on improving the productivity and efficiency of Queensland's agricultural industries and assisting them to take advantage of business and market opportunities and maintain their international competitiveness.⁹

Biosecurity

The Biosecurity output is an important component underpinning Queensland's capability to respond and manage the impact of pests, diseases, chemical residues and contaminants on economic activity, resources of economic value, human health, social amenity and the natural environment.¹⁰

Fisheries

The Fisheries output manages the State's wild fisheries resources and fish habitats that balance commercial, economic and community interests with the principles of ecologically sustainable development.¹¹

Rural and Regional Community Services

Rural and Regional Community Services helps to build and maintain viable rural and regional communities that offer employment and lifestyle opportunities. This is achieved through the provision of services to support and engage with rural and regional communities, and driving the implementation of the Blueprint for the Bush initiative throughout Queensland.¹²

Issues raised at the public hearing

Issues the committee raised with the Minister at the public hearing on 21 July 2009 include:

- Budgeted departmental figures for supplies and services;
- Future departmental services provided online, and the effect this will have on staffing in regional areas;
- Departmental asset sales and reinvestment into new research facilities;

- Action taken by the Department to restore populations of native fish and further recreational fishing in Queensland;
- Future plans for Queensland's animal pest, barrier fences;
- Funding for service programs in rural Queensland;
- Federal/State cooperation on policy and programs, and other support initiatives relating to rural and regional communities;
- Achievements in fire ant eradication;
- Government measures and assistance to primary industries;
- Staff reductions in the Office of Rural and Regional Communities;
- Animal welfare codes and government policy towards stock welfare in future flood scenarios;
- The Queensland Fisheries Strategy 2009-2014;
- Delivery of the department's Fresh Approach strategy;
- Department's efforts to locate and eradicate invasive weeds;
- The sustainability of Queensland's fishery resources;
- The policing of green zones for recreational fishing;
- The future direction of the Australian Agricultural College Corporation; and
- The sale of Forestry Plantation Queensland assets.

Portfolio of the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability

The Minister's portfolio comprises the following organisational units from Climate Change and Sustainability (CCS), within the Department of Environment and Resource Management:

- Conservation and Environmental Services;
- Sustainable Futures; and
- Performance Capability.

Department of Environment and Resource Management

The Department of Environment and Resource Management, created on the 26 March 2009, combines the work of the former Department of Natural Resources and Water and the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure a coordinated approach to conserving our natural environment for the benefit of Queenslanders.

⁹ State Budget 2009-10 Service Delivery Statements Book 2, p. 2-16.

¹⁰ State Budget 2009-10 Service Delivery Statements Book 2, p. 2-16.

¹¹ State Budget 2009-10 Service Delivery Statements Book 2, p. 2-17.

¹² State Budget 2009-10 Service Delivery Statements Book 2, p. 2-17.

The following table compares the budget allocations for the portfolio of the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability for 2008-09 and 2009-10.

Budget Allocations	2008-09 \$'000	2009-10 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
Departmental services	89,500	352,531
Equity adjustment	(108)	(24,327)
<i>Administered Items</i>	-	-
Vote	89,392	328,204

Source: *Departmental advice on the breakdown of appropriations for the Minister's portfolio within DERM.*

The following is a summary of the estimated output costs for CCS in 2009-10.

2009-10 Output Summary	2009-10 Estimate \$'000
Climate Change and Sustainability	
Conservation and Environmental Services	265,525
Sustainable Futures	116,028
Performance and Capability	27,895
Total	409,448

Source: *State Budget 2009-10 Service Delivery Statement Book 3, p. 3-206.*

Budgeted capital expenditure for environmental protection in 2009-10 is \$33 million.¹³

Priorities highlighted in the SDS for 2009-10 include:

- The department will coordinate the implementation of the revised Queensland Climate Change Strategy to ensure Queensland remains at the forefront of climate change response;
- Additional funding of \$50 million over five years is provided for the Great Barrier Reef protection package;
- Additional funding of \$1.2 million per annum is provided for an increase in comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement assessments;
- Ongoing funding of \$5 million per annum is provided for the maintenance of assets on the protected areas estate; and
- Funding of \$1.2 million has been identified for a feasibility study for a new Great Walk from the Daintree River to the tip of Cape York.

Issues raised at the public hearing

Issues the committee raised with the Minister at the public hearing on 21 July 2009 include:

- Matters relating to the training and administration of the ClimateSmart Home Service scheme;
- Staffing issues in relation to the employment of electricians within the ClimateSmart Home Service scheme;
- Steps taken by the department to ensure the preservation of the Great Sandy Region of Fraser Island;
- The proposed declaration of the Cooloola region as a 'Recreation Area';
- Proposed project funding for tourism infrastructure;
- Proposed adoption of the Cooloola extension of the Fraser Island World Heritage area;
- The audit of the Dingo Management Strategy, and other matters relating to the management of dingoes on Fraser Island;
- The water quality of Fraser Island's lakes;
- Information on the sustainable population of dingoes for Fraser Island;
- Government efforts to bolster Koala populations in Queensland's coastal regions;
- The Gazettal of new national parks;
- Environmental benefits of the Government's Eco Fund;
- Departmental actions taken to preserve Queensland's biodiversity;
- Biodiversity strategies and captive breeding programs that have ceased;
- Successful transportation of the first hairy-nosed wombat from its original habitat to St George;
- Progress made on the Government's commitments regarding the construction of Queensland's Great Walks;
- Government spending on climate change projects;
- Budgetary and staffing issues relating to Sustainable Futures;
- Measures taken by the Queensland Climate Change Fund to support households and small businesses to reduce their carbon emissions; and
- Measures taken by the Department to support business innovations that contribute to energy and water savings.

¹³ *State Budget 2009-10 Capital Statement – Budget Paper No.3, p. 72.*

Recommendation

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the *Appropriation Bill 2009*, for the portfolios of: the Attorney General and Minister for Industrial Relations; the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland; and the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.



Jo-Ann Miller

Chair

August 2009

Committee Members

Ms Jo-Ann Miller MP (Chair)
Member for Bundamba

Mr Lawrence Springborg MP (Deputy Chair)
Member for Southern Downs

Mr Glen Elmes MP
Member for Noosa

Mr Ray Hopper MP
Member for Condamine

Ms Amanda Johnstone MP
Member for Townsville

Ms Mary-Anne O'Neill MP
Member for Kallangur

Ms Carryn Sullivan MP
Member for Pumicestone

Secretariat

Kellie Moule (Research Director)

Alistair Maclennan (Research Officer)

Narelle Robinson (Executive Assistant)

STATEMENT OF RESERVATION
Attorney General, Justice and Industrial Relations
Secretary of Committee E

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

General comments on the Estimates Process

The Estimates Process is the greatest opportunity for parliamentary scrutiny of Government appropriations in a unicameral system and it is unfortunate the process does not allow for well considered deliberations by parliamentary committees such as this one.

The inherent processes of the Estimates process fail to provide the level of scrutiny of the Government's use of taxpayer's money.

The limited number of questions without notice allocated to each Minister fails to ensure that committee members have the opportunity to prepare adequately for the Committee's hearings particularly in areas where the budget papers provide very little information.

The limiting of information to these Estimates Committees, both in terms of the limited useful information in the Budget Papers, as well as the limited number of questions on notice does not in any way assist the committee's work.

In addition to the information available to the committee prior to the committee's hearings there is limited time for members of the committee to gain detailed information from Ministers during the process.

During this session there has been a continuance of the disturbing trend of Ministers failing to answer specific questions from some committee members, instead giving a very general answer, which had been pre-prepared, about Government directions or policies.

As a result I have very significant reservations about how informed the Committee's report is.

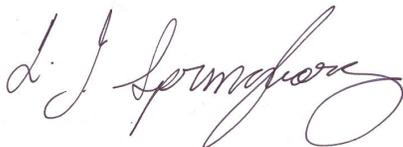
Attorney General and Justice and Industrial Relations

With consideration complete for the Attorney General Justice and Industrial Relations portfolio the following reservations are held –

- The budget papers for the Justice and Attorney General portfolio are poorly reported, and provide little indication of how the funding allocations are distributed to each area within the portfolio.
- A response to a question on notice which asked for a more detailed break down of funding to the different areas within the Justice portfolio failed to provide any real detail, considering the same question asked during the 2008/09 estimates hearing provided considerably more on how much funding was being allocated to each of the courts and areas of service delivery.
- The budget papers provided no comparison on how spending from previous years in capital works for the portfolio were progressing and there was no explanation for significant delay in capital works expenditure on the new Supreme/District court precinct.
- The number of offices and agencies that fall under the Attorney General and Justice Portfolio was not reflected in the time allocated for consideration in committee.

- Reservations are held about the lack of additional staff being budgeted for in the Courts and Tribunal services. The budget papers indicate a considerable increase in work coming into the courts yet staffing levels above estimated actual for 2008/09 have not been budgeted for and will impact on overall service delivery.
- Court backlogs continue to remain high in some court jurisdictions.
- An announcement made on the morning of the estimates hearing regarding recommendations by the Moynihan review whilst noted in the budget papers, there was no detail provided to allow for the committee to consider, nor was there any detail on how possible changes would impact on the budget for the Justice Department during 2009/10.
- During the Estimates Hearing the Attorney General was uncooperative and provided limited responses to the majority of non-government questions that were put to him.
- There was a genuine attempt to resist answering legitimate questions about the conduct of the Electoral Commission during the last state election.
- Concerns are held about the delay in bringing prosecutions to court within required timelines and the responses provided by the Attorney as to the delays do not provide any clearer picture as to this delay.
- The level of outstanding fines in the SPER system are concerning and the delayed announcement by the Government regarding fine dodgers, was clearly more about show than actually recovering money, given that powers have been in place to seize property since the laws came in almost ten years ago.
- Reservations are held regarding no new judicial appointments being budgeted for in the 2009/10 financial year. Across each court jurisdiction the budget papers clearly indicate increased work loads and this failure to budget for additional appointments will further strain the systems ability to meet clearance rates for matters lodged.
- There was a clear reluctance on behalf of the Minister to provide a detailed break down of workplace breaches within public sector. Requests for a break down by Department were steered instead towards a regional breakdown, but the Minister clearly wanted to avoid this answer, instead choosing to partially answer the question in what appeared to be an attempt to avoid identifying problem areas where workplace health and safety breaches had occurred. Given the Queensland Government is the largest employer in the State, having a totally open and accountable workplace health and safety system is vital to protecting and nurturing the work environment for all staff.
- Overall the budget papers and the Committee hearing indicate that there will be no significant investment in the court system and the lack of clear direction and leadership will further hinder the courts abilities to provide timely justice.

Signed



Lawrence Springborg
 Deputy Leader of the Opposition
 Shadow Minister for Attorney General Justice and Industrial Relations
 Member for Southern Downs

STATEMENT OF RESERVATION
Climate Change & Sustainability
Secretary of Committee E

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

General comments on the Estimates Process

The Estimates Process is the greatest opportunity for parliamentary scrutiny of Government appropriations in a unicameral system and it is unfortunate the process does not allow for well-considered deliberations by parliamentary committees such as this one.

It is an inherent failing of the Estimates Process that it does not provide an adequate level of scrutiny of the Government's use of taxpayer's money.

The limited number of questions without notice allocated to each Minister fails to ensure that committee members have the opportunity to prepare adequately for the Committee's hearings, particularly in areas where the budget papers provide very little information.

The limiting of information to these Estimates Committees, both in terms of the limited useful information in the Budget Papers, as well as the limited number of questions on notice does not in any way assist the committee's work.

In addition to the information available to the committee prior to the committee's hearings there is limited time for members of the committee to gain detailed information from Ministers during the process.

During the session there was a continuance of the disturbing trend of Ministers failing to answer specific questions from some committee members, instead giving a very general answer, which had been pre-prepared, about Government directions or policies.

As a result I have very significant reservations about how informed the Committee's report is.

Climate Change & Sustainability-

With consideration complete for the Climate Change & Sustainability portfolio the following reservations are held –

ClimateSmart Home Service

It is disappointing to find that the Minister takes no responsibility for her failure to ensure that jobs generated by this scheme stay in Queensland. The Minister's belief that outsourcing the implementation of this scheme to another organisation removes any responsibility for this failure demonstrates an inability to anticipate the ramification of decisions beyond the short-term.

ClimateSmart Home Service Training

The Minister was repeatedly asked how many electricians in total have been trained for this service since it commenced. The only answer she was able to provide was that the service employed 200 electricians. Being unable to answer this question raises serious doubts about the accountability measures put in place by the Minister to monitor the delivery of this service.

That the Minister also advised that no follow-up is being done with electricians to discover why they have left the service, makes doubtful any claim the Minister may make that value-for-money is being maintained with the delivery of this service.

Fraser Island Dingos

The Minister's blatant attempt to misrepresent discussion as LNP policy demonstrates her failure to understand the issues in question when addressing dingo management on Fraser Island. This is further reinforced by her inability to advise the committee of the sustainable population of dingoes on Fraser Island as anything other than some number between the population estimated by rangers and the population estimated by local residents.

Decreasing koala population in South-east Queensland

The Minister's response to the continuing decline in the koala population in south-east Queensland demonstrates her failure to acknowledge that this Government's previous action to stop this decline has failed. Her response that a new State Planning Policy has been fast-tracked to be in place by the end of this year is merely a continuation of existing failed policy. This government has already demonstrated a consistent failure in planning as evidenced by the decision to allow a Queensland state primary school to be built at Thornlands, clearing large amounts of koala habitat, on the basis that it was urgent infrastructure. That a school was required as urgent infrastructure demonstrates an existing planning failure. What certainty can there be, that new planning regulations will provide any more protection than those currently in place?

The failure of the minister to commit to purchasing any of the remaining koala habitat in the Redland City Council area, the majority of which is privately held land, is a further demonstration that this government's commitment to talk and rhetoric far outweighs its commitment to direct action to protect endangered species.

Decrease in Capital Expenditure

It is disappointing to see that the Bligh Government continued to decrease its capital expenditure for the environment over the past three years. The Minister's explanation for this – that the decrease is due to the conclusion of the programs those funds were allocated to – is doubly disappointing. Rather than initiate new programs to maintain the same level of environmental protection, the Government has chosen to continually lower their capital expenditure. This is not consistent with an ongoing commitment to increasing environmental protection.

Failure to Answer Questions

It was a great concern on a number of occasions that the Minister failed to answer the question put to her. When asked about training levels and cessation of captive breeding programs, the Minister frequently responded with a pre-written answer that did not answer the specific question asked. Such a response would appear to indicate that the Minister is not fully aware of the details required in order to manage her portfolio properly.

Signed



GLEN ELMES MP

Member for Noosa

Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability