



Speech by
**Mr DENVER
BEANLAND**

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Estimates Committee B

Report

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (3.57 p.m.): In rising to speak to this Estimates committee report, I wish to refer to The Arts portfolio. In its May Budget, the coalition provided some \$10m for the design costs of the Queensland cultural heritage centre and the gallery of modern art. In its Budget, the minority Beattie Labor Government has slashed that commitment to just \$4m. It did this even though it made an election commitment to advance an additional \$15m for the project over and above the \$10m promised by the coalition. In fact, if one looks at the election documents of the former Labor Opposition in relation to this matter, they state that nevertheless there is scope for some reprioritising of capital spending with \$40m allocated to the Cultural Centre Stage 6 in 1999-2000 being advanced in keeping with Labor's commitment to accelerate capital spending.

Instead of an acceleration of spending, we have seen a rapid deceleration, because funding for the project has dropped back to a figure of some \$4m. So the Labor Government has not only not advanced the additional \$15m on top of the former coalition Government's commitment of \$10m but also cut back that \$10m to \$4m. We find yet another broken promise to the people of Queensland in a very important area of the arts. It is of great concern not only to Brisbane but also for the whole of Queensland that the Government does not show a genuine commitment to the establishment of this cultural centre by the year 2000.

Clearly, Government members have no interest in this matter, as is evident by their claim that they will review the issue. When in Opposition, Labor members had plenty of time to look at the subject. In fact, at that time they were very supportive of it and said that they would bring forward additional sums of money for it. However, now that they are in Government, they have got cold feet, so much so that the project has simply been put on the backburner and there is every prospect of it withering on the vine. This is a very important matter to the arts community of this vast State.

I turn now to the Corporate Administration Agency. When in Opposition, the current Minister was very critical of the agency. In fact, this is another example of a great Labor backflip. In last year's Estimates committee hearings the then shadow Minister was highly critical of the establishment of the agency. That criticism was so vehement that one could have assumed that, on coming to Government, the Labor Party would have acted very quickly indeed to dismantle the agency. However, it would appear that time has mellowed that criticism, or perhaps the current Minister has discovered how misguided his criticism of that very worthwhile initiative was. It appears that the Minister no longer has a problem with the role performed by the Corporate Administration Agency. In fact, the Estimates committee transcripts seem to imply that the agency is proving to be a great success indeed. One can only assume that the former shadow Minister was engaging in a political exercise to create a stir and was simply playing a game of politics and that he now considers the establishment of the agency to be a very worthwhile initiative. The project will certainly continue and, if it was not a worthwhile initiative, the Government has had ample time to give it the chop. However, that has not been the case at all.

In relation to a number of areas raised in the Estimates committee hearings, particularly Opera Queensland, the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra, the Minister seems to lack vision and direction. He likes to describe himself as the self-styled patron of the arts—I hear that regularly—yet it is quite clear that he is not very self-styled when it comes to the direction in which those bodies are heading. The comments that the Minister made in the Estimates committee hearings show that he has little vision or direction. I certainly hope that in the coming years—not just the next 12 months—those bodies continue to receive the Government support that they are so worthy of receiving.

It is quite clear that there have been some changes in a number of other areas. The Minister likes to talk about celebrating the diversity of the regional areas of our State through the Queensland Biennial Festival of Music. Of course, the diversity of the regional areas of the State is not an issue, because the festival is only going to Brisbane, Mackay and Townsville; it is not going to all the regional centres of the State.

Time expired.
