



Speech by

JEFF SEENEY

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Estimates Committee C

Report

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (5.20 p.m.): I appreciate the opportunity to make some comments about the report of Estimates Committee C. I took particular interest in those parts of the transcript of the hearing that related to Main Roads funding. I have an extensive background in local government and I know well the effect that Main Roads funding programs have on the budgets of local governments, particularly those in my electorate, which contains quite a number of relatively small local governments.

I was particularly grateful to note that in reply to a number of questions the Minister gave assurances that agreed price performance contracts—APPCs—and routine maintenance performance contracts—RMPCs—would continue to be offered to local governments to allow them to maintain their work forces and to take away the peaks and troughs in the funds available to them. I must admit that I had some concerns that that would not happen, but the Minister gave a number of assurances when answering some of the questions that he was asked that those programs would continue. I am grateful for that. We will watch closely to make sure that the Minister's rhetoric is matched by action.

I note that the Roads Implementation Program has not been released yet. We will be paying particular attention to that program when it is released. It very quickly becomes the bible for a lot of small local authorities. They need to know that those programs are there. They need to have a sense of security that those programs will be delivered so that they can plan their budget, funding and works programs around them. Once again, it is easy to get the rhetoric right, but we will be watching to make sure that the Transport Minister delivers.

Having served on local authorities during the term of the last Labor Government, I know that the record that he inherits is not a good one. The threats that local authorities had to face with respect to funding from the last Labor Government that served in this State caused a deal of anguish for local authorities up and down the State. Given the current Minister's background, it is with some scepticism that I await the delivery of those programs.

Mr Bredhauer: What are you gibbering about?

Mr SEENEY: The Socialist Left philosophy is all about bikeways and buses, isn't it? I have some doubt whether there is any true appreciation of the effect that Main Roads funding has on small communities. I have some doubt also about the degree to which these things are appreciated by the current Minister. I have some concern about the degree of emphasis that is placed on bikeways, buses and those other things that are dear to the heart of the Socialist Left.

We will watch closely when the Roads Implementation Program is published. It is a little curious to me that it is taking so long. From my experience in local government, I know the way in which projects are planned and put together in that document. It is a little curious that it has taken so long. No doubt there is a perfectly good reason. We will watch closely when that document is delivered.

In all sincerity, I commend the Minister for the comments that he made at the Estimates committee about maintaining employment levels throughout those small shires. The shire work forces are incredibly important to the economy of small towns. Any threat to those work forces not only threatens the 15, 20 or 30 jobs involved; it threatens the wellbeing and continued functioning of the whole community. I believe the Minister appreciates that, and I commend him for that. In all sincerity, I hope that those programs can be delivered in such a way that those work forces can continue to function in the way they are now and can continue to contribute to the economic base of those communities.
