



Speech by

JOHN MICKEL

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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Estimates Committee A
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Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (12.30 p.m.): I particularly want to commend the Premier on the establishment of the Policy Coordination Unit. Every contemporary State and Federal Government has moved in the direction of a Department of Premier and Cabinet. The previous Government came unstuck because the Leader of the Opposition was fixated with the Office of the Cabinet. It became part of his lexicon in speech after speech he made in this Chamber. I knew, as a humble staffer, that he was hopelessly wrong, and in Government he found out that he should have taken steps, as he did, to subtly reintroduce it.

Honourable members should look at the absolute howlers that the Leader of the Opposition made without proper consultation. We remember, of course, the increase in fees for kangaroo shooters and the oil/tyre levy when the Department of Environment was suddenly told to get money because of a Budget shortfall. But the one that I used to love to dine out on was, of course, the park pass where park visitors were required to wear a park pass when they went into a national park. It was fine in isolation, but obviously no-one had spoken to the member for Noosa because his electorate includes a national park which has a nude beach. Just exactly where someone was to hang their park pass in the case of inspection was never adequately explained.

The other point was the disintegration of the Cabinet process under the Borbidge Government. The Courier-Mail highlighted this earlier this year when it discussed the super stadium decision. A strong central policy body will ensure that all departments are fully consulted on submissions. In this way, line Ministers are aware of how each submission impacts upon their department. Timely lodgment of Cabinet submissions and adequate consultation is an appropriate way to function.

I also wish to raise the incidence of non-appearance of public servants before the committee. I acknowledge that, under the current process, a Minister does not have to allow a public servant to appear. I believe this whole process was debauched two years ago when, under a different model admittedly, Estimates Committee A required the appearance of Wendy Armstrong who, amongst other responsibilities, was appointed to advise the Opposition when it was in Government. We were fascinated by this role and wanted to know exactly what advice we could expect. The then Premier ignored the committee, overruled its wishes to question Mrs Armstrong and, in fact, defended her non-appearance. I say that public servants owe it to the Parliament to show up if they have been listed to attend. I also believe that public servants should provide punctual advice to committees. I would ask directors-general to ensure that their procedures for correspondence and advice are up to scratch so that they are fully accountable to this Parliament.

I particularly want to pick up also on the money that was allocated to the Willows, contrary to caretaker conventions and, as I understand it, in clear contravention of the Cabinet Handbook. It is unfair to groups in my electorate, for instance, who are told that they have to go through the proper process. I remember that, when the Goss Government was in caretaker mode after the Mundingburra by-election when I worked for the now Premier, every courtesy was extended to the member for Toowoomba South. I believe that, at the very best, in turn that courtesy should have been extended to

the Leader of the Opposition, the now Premier, when the Borbidge Government went into caretaker mode.

I believe the new State Development Department contains the appropriate collection of former departments to focus on jobs, but I would like to see the role of overseas trade offices particularly focused. I am concerned at the tragic loss to this State of Loftus Harris, who is now heading up the rival department in New South Wales. I believe these overseas offices should face a constant review, because in time we may need to set up a focus on certainly the Indian subcontinent and also the Middle East. It may be that these can be provided if other offices are not measuring up.

I want to finish on one more point. I do not believe, for example, that the excellent decision made by the Borbidge Government to establish an office in Indonesia should be scrapped at the moment.

Time expired.
