



Speech by

Mr LEN STEPHAN

MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL APPROPRIATION BILL

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Estimates Committee G

Report

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie—NPA) (4.35 p.m.): The Minister has just said that there has not been a cut in funding. However, he has not actually been spending very much money on some of these programs, either. I refer to a couple of small projects in my electorate, such as the raising of the level of the Cedar Pocket Dam and the pumping in of Gympie's water supply. I have not heard anything from the Minister about those projects, and I will be looking for affirmative correspondence in that regard.

Mr Gibbs: Do you still give elocution lessons?

Mr STEPHAN: No, I am learning from the Minister, actually. I would not worry too much about that.

I turn now to the proposal for a Mary Burnett Centre for Water Sustainability, which has been put forward by people in the industry. I commend them for their interest and support. The proposal for a Mary Burnett Centre for Water Sustainability brings a regional focus to an issue of critical importance to the future economic viability and quality of life in the Wide Bay region. The centre will not be a decision-making body, but it will focus on knowledge and education and communication skills. The activities supported and the programs developed will have a regional focus, but the centre will develop State, national and international networks.

Water sustainability will not be viewed in isolation. It does not matter where we come from; we need to take notice of that particular aspect because, in many instances, we are using water but we do not really know where it is coming from. There is a lot of work to do in that sector, particularly in relation to the underground water system. I do not believe that much has been done to look for underground water supplies. In some areas it is very intense.

I turn now to highlight the problems pertaining to weeds and weed control.

Mr Springborg: Rat-tail grass.

Mr STEPHAN: Rat-tail grass is only one of them. I ask the Minister not to forget about that program. He should make sure that it is controlled as much as possible. Although it is being controlled reasonably well—and I say that with all sincerity—we need only to let it go for about six months and we would go down the gurgler very quickly.

The Minister for Tourism, Sport and Racing is still in the Chamber. I think he has been waiting for an excuse to make a comment during this debate, but he has not found one yet. His department is very important, particularly because of the subsidies that it provides to sporting clubs. There is no doubt in my mind that this has had a great influence on many clubs throughout the State. It has helped them to upgrade their buildings and grounds and to provide lighting at various centres where daytime and night-time sports events are held. Although the funding that some of those clubs have received is not necessarily great, it provides incentives to younger people and others who are taking part in sports and ensures that they can take part in the sports of their choice. That certainly makes a great difference to the viability of many country sporting centres.

Time expired.