



Speech by

Mr M. ROWELL

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard 22 October 1998

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL APPROPRIATION BILL

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Estimates Committee D

Report

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (12.10 p.m.): A number of frivolous claims have been made by the Minister for Primary Industries. In taking part in this debate on the report of Estimates Committee D, I wish to make absolutely clear to the Parliament my involvement with the QLMA. I refer the Minister for Primary Industries to a letter dated 14 May 1998 from me, as the then Minister for Primary Industries, to the Chairman of the Queensland Livestock and Meat Authority, Mr Richard Goldup, which stated—

"... I am pleased to advise that additional funding will be made available in 1998/99 to address the potential insolvency of the QLMA. The exact amount is yet to be determined, but sufficient funding will be provided so as to prevent the insolvency of the QLMA."

The letter went on to state that "based upon a further independent assessment as outlined in my previous letter which will be undertaken over the next four weeks" there will be no cost incurred to the authority. A lot of what the Minister has been saying about the QLMA is absolutely incorrect. We were prepared to support it in redressing the situation that it found itself in as a result of the Casey era.

I wish also to speak about certain other aspects of the DPI. I note that money has been provided for the Northwatch program. That is absolutely essential. During the papaya fruit fly outbreak in Queensland, \$30,000—a very meagre amount—was provided by the then Government, with Mr Casey as Primary Industries Minister, which did not allow for a complete trapping program to be carried out around the Cairns area. I believe it was largely because of that that up to five generations of the papaya fruit fly were allowed to breed before being detected in the Cairns region.

Earlier in the year, there was almost an epidemic on the islands close to PNG. DPI staff monitored the situation and assisted with a program of eradication similar to that on the mainland in the Cairns quarantine area. That outbreak was very costly for the growers. The program of disinfestation meant that growers had to spray their fruit with chemicals. A lot of good work was done by the DPI, and the public also assisted greatly. Roadblocks were set up and the public had to stop to have any fruit they were carrying inspected. Additionally, consignments from growers were also inspected. It was a considerable disadvantage for the growers and it also caused disruption to the general public. It would have cost more but for the very good work by both growers and the DPI which resulted in total eradication. This program will be completed in about May/June 1999. Monitoring will continue and, hopefully, we will maintain total eradication, with the support from the other States. There is no doubt that it is a great achievement.

I wish to move on briefly to discuss the sugarcane smut problem, which could prove detrimental to the Queensland sugar industry. It has been found in Western Australia and some work is being carried out to ensure that we do not see smut on the east coast, which would disrupt the \$2 billion industry in Queensland. I hope the Minister is conferring very closely with the Western Australian Government, because the transportation of all sorts of products from Western Australia could prove detrimental to Queensland.

Time expired.
