



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Estimates Committee A

Report No. 2

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.54 p.m.): I would like to add my thanks, as I did when speaking to report No. 1 of Estimates Committee A, to the staff who provided help and assistance. What this particular Estimates committee provided with regard to the Department of State Development was really what it did not provide. The department has been in place for some four months now, so one would think that they would be starting to get their act together. But whenever we asked questions of substance about things such as export and trade, jobs targets and manufacturing, it was all generalisation from the Minister about how he was going to ramp up this and ramp up that—how he was going to ramp up this, that and the other thing. I believe that this really showed to members of the committee that here is a department that has been totally preoccupied with getting itself reorganised, bringing people out of Treasury, the Premier's Department and TSBI, and developing a power base rather than getting on with the job and really starting to make some things happen. The Department of State Development is the department that is very important in terms of making some real jobs for Queenslanders if this target of 5% in three years is ever going to be achieved. It is the department that has to develop new industry. The department has to develop exports. The department has to have some vision. But more than vision, the department has to make some things happen.

Throughout the Estimates committee procedure, the Minister was unable to provide the committee with any targets for Queensland export sales. We could not get monthly targets or targets on an industry basis. This highlighted the Minister's failure to develop a comprehensive plan that could protect Queensland from the downturn in the Asian markets. Obviously, the Minister and the department and, therefore, Queensland are flying blind. I am calling for Queensland to establish an export intelligence system so that we can provide our exporters with some up-to-date intelligence on overseas markets.

If people want to access new markets they have to know where the trends are. They have to know where the niche markets are, where the opportunities are, where we have difficulties in getting products in, and other places where there are new emerging markets. This sort of practical advice, backed up by proper export support on lines of credit and the type of products that are required—joint ventures and joint partnership arrangements—is the sort of thing that is needed. If we are to attempt the development of a target to increase our exports, Queensland must have an export intelligence system so that those who are heavily involved in trade and those who wish to expand into trade can know which areas will provide the most benefit. The Queensland Government should work closely with Austrade to develop a more sophisticated information system for Queensland exports. We must have some monthly projections. We must have some targets, otherwise the department is simply heading nowhere.

Mr Hamill: I didn't think you liked targets.

Mr HORAN: We had a target in Health that we reached. We took Queensland from having the worst waiting lists in Australia under members opposite to the best waiting lists in Australia under us.

With regard to small business—there was a 68% increase in the budget for the Office of Small Business. Most disappointingly, the Minister and his departmental officers indicated that there would be no benefits flowing to small business this financial year as a result of a 68% increase in small business. It is completely unacceptable to small business to have to wait 12 months to see some—if any—results of a 68% increase in budget. But I suppose that is just the attitude that is being taken towards small business. Small business is not even mentioned in the name of the portfolio. The Small Business Council has not met since the change of Government. We are seeing an obsession with particular pet projects and no work being done by this department on small business, which already provides the great majority of jobs throughout Queensland.

I believe that one of the real failures of the Beattie Government will be its failure to represent small business. Members can see already the way in which the Labor Government has refused to support small business in the fight to stop extended trading hours—something that all small businesses need. Again, we saw no target in manufacturing. Obviously, the Beattie Government is not trying to introduce any new manufacturing industries to Queensland. It does not seem to have a particular target there.

The worst and the most disappointing aspect of these Estimates was the jobs target. At the end of the committee hearings, we asked the Minister what was his jobs target for these 12 months. We asked what was the percentage he was aiming at, or the reduction in unemployment that he was aiming at, this year. The Minister had no answer. The question took him by surprise, and all he could say was that it was 5% in five years, when we know that the target is 5% in three years. We have heard that over and over again.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mr HORAN: The Treasurer takes that end of the spectrum and I take the other end. This Government has no target whatsoever for jobs.

Time expired.
