



Speech by

**Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE**

**MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE**

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Hansard 21 October 1998

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Committee (Cognate Debate)**

**Estimates Committee A**

**Report No. 2**

**Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE** (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.35 p.m.): It is a matter of some disappointment to me that this year we saw the Estimates process become very largely an exercise in deception and a dumping ground by the new Government in respect of the perceived problems of the previous administration rather than proper scrutiny of this Budget, which is admittedly essentially a reflection of the coalition's May Budget presented to this place with some alterations around the edges. So much for the claims of the member for Brisbane Central of higher standards of accountability and greater respect for the parliamentary process!

I have previously expressed concern—and I do so here today—about the reintroduction of the Cabinet office. It was interesting to hear the comments of my friend the Chairman of Estimates Committee A, "Once an apparatchik always an apparatchik." I just say to the honourable member for Logan that we should be learning from the lessons of the past, and I believe that the Cabinet office in the Goss years, which he championed, was one of the reasons for the demise of the Goss Government.

We have seen the budget of the Premier's Department doubled; we have seen staffing increase from 607 to 697, principally to support a Policy Coordination Unit; and we have seen a clandestine attempt to reintroduce the despised and hated Office of the Cabinet and a centralised administration, which strangled Queensland's Public Service during the Goss years and also the Westminster system by bypassing the Ministers in respect of the conduct of Cabinet Government. Then we have the additional staff in the Premier's Office—two staff—allegedly to handle the regional Cabinet schedule, only marginally more extensive than that of the previous Government. The Cabinet secretariat numbers are also up by 50% from 8 to 12. Of course, the Premier first denied this and then trotted out the same excuse as for his own office. We have seen a massive abuse of public funds by the setting-up within the Premier's Department of essentially a Labor Party centralised control, a unit of party hacks, to make sure that there is central control and Labor Party domination of the Public Service in this State.

I will just touch briefly on the Willows. On one hand the Premier described the Willows as an unfunded promise, but on the other hand he listed it as one of several projects listed against the Premier's Department contingency provision allocation. So he cannot say in response to one question that it was unfunded and then say in answer to another question from Ms Boyle—

"In 1998 major coalition Government commitments against these funds included the following: the Willows Sports Complex, \$3.5m; St John's Cathedral restoration, \$200,000. I am not being critical."

That is what the Premier said. It seems to me that, as we see so often, this is another backflip and the Premier speaks with a forked tongue.

I am sick and tired of the pompous announcements by the Premier in relation to credit cards when I was the Premier who took credit cards off Ministers except in the case of overseas travel, which

is exactly the situation that exists now. This Government, contrary to the repeated untruths of the Premier, is operating under my rules and, might I say, what a good set of rules they are.

How is it that, in revisions to guidelines approved by the Premier and his Cabinet, ministerial staff can still have credit cards for domestic travel although the Premier told the Estimates committee that they cannot? Under the new guidelines the number was reduced from three to two per office, but guidelines issued by the Premier dated 3 August 1998 state—

"Ministers may authorise the director of MSB to issue official credit cards to senior advisers or equivalent in the office of Minister. Generally a limit of two cards per office applies. By utilising official credit cards, the need for cash advances for domestic travel is negated."

Another blatant untruth by the Premier! The only change is that it is down from three to two. The fact is that guidelines trumpeted by this Premier are essentially the guidelines I introduced when credit cards for Ministers were withdrawn.

Time expired.

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