



Speech by

Hon. TOM BARTON

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Hansard 21 October 1998

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Estimates Committee B

Report

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (4.23 p.m.): I would like to join with other members in thanking the committee for its report and for the very good work that it did, particularly the splendid job performed by the chairman, an old union colleague of mine with whom I have worked over many, many years. This is a good Budget—a Budget which I am proud to have debated in this House, a Budget which delivers on Labor's commitment to the people of Queensland, particularly in the areas of Police and Corrective Services. I am very pleased at the unanimous endorsement—there was no amendment or dissent—of the report by Estimates Committee B as it relates to the Police and Corrective Services issue. I think that says something about the quality of this Budget.

The highlights from my perspective include the fact that the Police budget has a 10.6% increase over last year's budget and that it is over \$8m higher than the budget that was introduced in only May this year. It is not the same budget, as the member for Broadwater tried to imply; it is a much better budget. It is a total budget of \$706m, providing \$42.135m in capital works and an additional 317 police officers, which will help reach the target of 7,132 police officers in this State by the end of this financial year. It puts in place our community policing initiatives by providing for 12 Police Beats and six shopfronts this year in addition to those already in place.

In relation to prisons, I am very pleased that we have been able to put \$3m extra into recurrent funding, with \$1.5m this year to provide 50 extra prison officers over and above the normal growth areas. That is because we know that the coalition cut prison officer numbers too greatly. The budget provides \$1m for basic equipment for prison officers that they badly need which the coalition would not provide them with while it wasted money on useless vehicles such as the Hummers. The State Budget has allocated a total prisons budget of \$437m, providing \$178m in capital works, which will generate—and this is most important—more than 2,000 job years this financial year in prisons alone and provide for 1,093 additional cells.

I should make one point. I noted in the transcript of proceedings that I was quoted as saying that prisoners were paid \$5 a week when they worked. I do not know whether I slipped up and misread it or whether somebody else did, but I should correct that and indicate that it is in fact \$5 per day.

The member for Broadwater made great play about my failure to answer a question and he wrote a reservation statement. That was in relation to a question that he tried to put on notice in breach of the Sessional Orders for the Budget Estimates. He did not give me the opportunity to answer the question on the day. It was, in fact, when the fine chairman was summing up that the member for Broadwater tried to place an additional question on notice. When he indicated that he had a question—he was waving it around—I thought it was one that I had already accepted earlier in the proceedings on another matter; I thought that it had been written out. I think it is absolutely atrocious that he should try to imply that I was required to answer a question in breach of the Sessional Orders. It was very clear from the Hansard, as his attempts to place that question on notice were not recorded. However, my comments certainly were recorded when I made the point that the proceedings had run so smoothly that only one question on notice had to be taken. That is well and truly recorded.

It is also upsetting that the member for Broadwater should imply that he had the unanimous support of the entire committee to write that reservation statement. Not even his own colleagues were prepared to sign his reservation statement. That is how much support he had—absolutely none—and I think he should be shown up for what he is: an absolute charlatan when it comes to making outrageous statements of that nature. Quite frankly, I was totally within my rights because I am not required to answer a question that has not been put on notice.

I think I also need to point out the fraud that he has perpetrated by saying that the entire Police budget and extra police were a result of the coalition's Police budget. In the two years that it was in office, the coalition supplied 160 police one year and 268 the next; we will be providing 317 this year. That puts it in the proper context. In relation to Police Beats, yes, three are provided in One Nation electorates and there are none in coalition electorates. That is not an indication that we are not looking after coalition electorates. One only has to look at the massive amounts of money being spent in western areas such as Roma on the watch-house and many of the police stations to see that that is not true.

Time expired.
