



Speech by

Hon. V. LESTER

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Hansard 17 September 1998

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (9.08 p.m.): In speaking to the Budget, I would like to refer to some local issues and then some issues in relation to my shadow portfolio. I am extremely disappointed that money has not been put aside to at least obtain land for the establishment in the future of a new hospital to service the Capricorn Coast. I have made calls for this hospital in the past. The present hospital, which is right on the ocean front, is at a stage of its life where it is not as serviceable as it could be. A totally new hospital is needed to service and meet the needs of this fast-growing area.

A similar situation exists with the fire and ambulance services, both of which are located in the main street. It is not safe for ambulances and fire trucks to be racing down a main street. Unfortunately, the vehicles cannot move straight onto the opposite side of the road because of the gardens that have been built in the middle of the road. Those services should be located away from the city centre in separate buildings but on one block of land, along with an emergency services and communications unit.

The Budget does not appear to provide funding for the new police station that we were hoping was to be built at Yeppoon. Indeed, funding has not even been provided to extend the existing police station. In addition, the previous Government obtained land for a new high school, but a lot of concern is being expressed in the electorate that the new high school has been put on hold or has been abandoned altogether. I shall endeavour to find out more about that when I return to my electorate next week. I assure the House that my constituents are not happy about it. An additional high school is needed in this area, which is going ahead at a great rate of knots.

Simply because a member is now in the Opposition, the new Government must not take things away from his or her electorate. The coalition was in Government for just over two years and we achieved an enormous amount for the Capricorn Coast. We were very successful. The people appreciated what was done and do not want to see coalition projects put on hold. For example, we must ensure that the road connecting Yeppoon and Rockhampton is widened to four lanes. Part of the road has already been widened to four lanes and any further work on the road should continue the four-laning.

In relation to my shadow portfolio, I am disappointed that it appears as though the coalition's 22% subsidy scheme for farmers, which was for small water supply schemes to a value of more than \$200,000, and which the coalition was reducing to schemes of more than \$75,000, will be scrapped altogether in this Budget. That certainly affects canegrowers; indeed, it affects all farmers. Also, there is to be a cutback in funding for stock route water conservation. Stock routes may not be used all the time, but it is a fact of life that in times of drought they are used and that is when the water supplies need to be available.

I also notice that administration in the Department of the Environment is being increased at the expense of the koala scheme, funding for which is being cut from \$4m to \$2.4m. That is just terrible. This was a good scheme; indeed, it was the main scheme. We are going to have a heap more bureaucrats and fewer koalas, and I do not think that that is a good trade-off.

In view of the time, I simply reiterate that much is needed in the Keppel electorate and I will continue to fight for whatever is required. In relation to my shadow portfolio, it would seem that assistance to people who live in the bush is being deviously cut already. The Minister needs to get his act together and ensure that he fights for the schemes that help the people of the bush. For example, the Governor's Speech did not make any mention of dams for Queensland. Frankly, we must provide strategically placed dams to adequately meet Queensland's future water needs. I know that in some instances there is a bit of an outcry against dams, but I only need to suggest that members look at the Fairbairn Dam. That dam was built in 1972 at a cost of \$23m. That dam now provides an enormous entertainment area for the people of Emerald. It is a fish regenerating dam. The water run-off is well controlled and it supports citrus growing, cotton growing, a number of mining towns and, of course, a number of coalmines. If members work out the tax that all of those organisations collectively pay—organisations that exist because that dam is there—the figure runs into hundreds of millions of dollars each year. That is the taxation benefit that the Federal Government receives from that dam, which cost it only \$23m. Many such schemes must be undertaken. If we do not ensure that we keep a balanced approach towards dams, the State will not continue to go ahead in the leaps and bounds that we hope it will. That certainly will not help the Labor Party's job creation program. In fact, in many ways this Budget does little for job enhancement.
