



Speech by

Hon. WENDY EDMOND

MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Estimates Committee E

Report

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha— ALP) (Minister for Health) (2.35 p.m.): I thank the chairman of the committee and all the members for their participation in Estimates Committee E. I acknowledge the statement of reservations by the non-Government members of the committee. Last year, I filled a similar role as a non-Government member on an Estimates committee with my now Cabinet colleagues the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and the Minister for Aboriginal and Islander Affairs.

I encourage all members of this Chamber and the media to compare the two statements of reservations. The one that is now before this Chamber is little more than a petty, thinly disguised attempt to whitewash the dismal performance of the member for Toowoomba South—"Headlines" Horan—as a policy maker and administrator. If the Opposition's greatest concern is that this Government has funded many of "Headlines" Horan's unfunded commitments, then that is a sad indictment on the Opposition working within the Westminster system. So much for Opposition scrutiny!

I will point out the key elements of Health that those members opposite have never wanted to hear and never wanted to be made public. This Minister's commitments are fully funded and this Minister will not be burdening our health system with a Horan hospital tax. Our massive boost to mental health is fully funded. The ads for the extra 200 staff started appearing in black and white in today's Courier-Mail. Our massive capital works program is fully funded without a Horan hospital tax. Almost 10,000 jobs in construction and health service delivery are fully funded. More than \$18m has been allocated for extra elective surgery and other measures to cut public hospital waiting lists. An amount of \$14m in recurrent funding has been allocated for extra surgery, increasing to almost \$18m next year—not just "Headline" Horan's one-off, pre-election bucket of money. There has been a 3.2% increase to hospital recurrent budgets instead of a 0.1% increase across all of Queensland—a measly \$2m. We gave more than that to the Gold Coast Hospital and the Nambour Hospital to meet their needs. The former Government wanted to allocate \$2m across all of Queensland. It said that was all the increases that the hospitals should get and kept loading extra work onto them. Unlike "Headline" Horan's commitments, all of this Government's commitments are fully funded.

With regard to point 2.1 of the statement of reservations by non-Government members, clearly the member for Maroochydore is confused about the Standing Orders. The answers were provided well within the time limit specified. If she had simply picked up the phone and called the secretary of the committee, she would have been able to find out. I have checked that and it has been proved. The member was either confused or too lazy to lift up the phone to call.

In relation to point 2.2, I stand by my comments about unfunded commitments, although I will concede—and I am quite happy to concede—that there was a mistake made on the issue of the unfunded commitment to provide a bus for the Charleville 60 and Better Program. In fact, this occurred at Charters Towers. I was aware of the one at Charters Towers; I had already made reference to it. However, when I saw another reference to Charleville in my briefing notes from the department, I

thought that this was just another one. The former Minister had promised so many around the State, it was another one. I readily admit that that was a mistake. I am surprised that the previous Minister has failed to pass on his list of commitments and briefing material to his colleague and that she has had to rely so heavily on the information that I gathered in Opposition and as Minister.

I am glad that Opposition members again raised the matter of the Robina and Noosa hospitals, because this is one of the great all-time health scandals that "Headlines" Horan pulled off. Queensland now has a \$909m debt to buy public health services from private hospitals—not from public hospitals, but from private hospitals, one of which is a profit-making hospital—on the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast for the next 20 years. That will lock in all the growth funds for the next 20 years. As to the appointment of Allen Allen and Hemsley, a check of the Hansard yet again shows the untruth of the Opposition member's statement. Judging by their overreaction, someone must be feeling a little sensitive on this issue. I wonder who it could be.

I beg to differ with paragraph 2.4, which states that the previous Minister always provided health service budgets in answer to my questions. There is no way that that happened. He provided some to the dorothy dixers, but the answers that he gave me were for the Budget of the year before. Those answers were one year out of date. He never gave me budgets for anything that was current. When we got the information, it was so out of date that it did not matter, because I already had it.

Paragraph 2.5 refers to capital works and, as I have done several times already, I will try to explain this very slowly and carefully to the member for Maroochydore. The changes and the allocations to projects in the 1998-99 year were for a range of reasons, including the fact that they were running so late that the planning had not been done, as it had not been done in Nambour.

Time expired.
