



Speech by

BRUCE DAVIDSON

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Hansard 28 October 1999

APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee G
Report

Mr DAVIDSON (Noosa—LP) (3.12 p.m.): I rise to speak on the report of Estimates Committee G. Firstly, I acknowledge the efforts of the Research Director, David Thannhauser, and his staff. He adopted a very professional approach with respect to all members of Estimates Committee G. Nothing was a problem and he met the deadlines to which he was committed. I place my appreciation for David on the public record. I acknowledge also the efforts of the staff in the Opposition offices, Mike Thomas and Kevin Riley, who spent many hours with me preparing our case for Estimates Committee G. I thought the Chairman, Grant Musgrove, conducted the hearing very professionally. The outcomes negotiated with the chairman were to my satisfaction.

I thought the approach of the staff of Fair Trading was professional. They were well briefed and had most of the information that the Opposition and I, as shadow Minister, required from the Minister and her department. Throughout the process we raised a number of issues, including one case involving business registrations. On 22 September, a person known to me applied to the department for business registration forms. The forms arrived on 23 September. I have no complaints about that; it is very good service. On 24 September the forms were returned to the Department of Fair Trading. During the hearing I informed the Minister that the person who lodged that application had not heard back from the department as at 14 October. The Minister advised that the registration had been processed on 11 October and had been sent. Given the information provided by the Minister at the hearing, I contacted my constituent, who advised me that he had not received the registration by 17 October. A couple of days later, on the 19th, he advised me that he had received the business registration. The Minister may have to look at this process. The request for the application forms was responded to speedily. Perhaps there is a problem with processing the registrations and getting them into the mail. I draw this issue to the attention of the Minister. Perhaps she can have a look at it. It is vital that we provide the most expedient and professional service that we possibly can to ensure that people can create business opportunities for themselves and the people of Queensland.

There seem to be some problems with the BACHCO business registration computer system. Based on the answer she provided, the Minister seems satisfied that most of those problems have been sorted out. There will always be teething problems with any new computer system. Let us hope that the \$1.7m that has been spent and the ongoing commitment of the provider to iron out the bugs that have been experienced will produce a solution.

I have always said that I do not believe that the current Estimates process represents the best use of taxpayers' resources. Based on my experience as a Minister, I know that weeks and weeks of work by departmental officers at all levels has to be undertaken in order to prepare for a two or three-hour Estimates session. I question whether that is the best use of resources. I acknowledge the need for the Opposition to have the opportunity to question Ministers on their budgets. However, I do not believe that the process we have in place at the moment is cost effective and is the best use of resources. Perhaps at some time in the future honourable members from both sides of the Chamber can review the process and try to find a more efficient use of taxpayers' funds and resources so that

staff are not tied up for weeks and, in some cases, months at a time in preparing for a two-hour Estimates hearing.

The Minister referred to the opening of some new Fair Trading offices, which was a Labor Party policy before the last election. That commitment was also given at the Estimates last year. That has not eventuated. I understand there are some problems with regional Fair Trading offices. For example, I have received a number of complaints from people in the Maryborough area that their actions are not processed with sufficient speed; that there seems to be a delay in investigating some of the complaints brought to the attention of the office. In the interests of Queenslanders lodging complaints with Consumer Affairs, the Minister should ensure that they are addressed in a more timely manner. I understand that some of the offices are operating with a tight number of investigators. The investigation of these consumer issues presents a tireless job for the investigators. I know the Minister is committed to ensuring that some of the offices are resourced, such as that in Mackay. She has placed people there—

Time expired.
