



Speech by

Hon. D. HAMILL

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Hansard 27 October 1999

APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee A
Report No. 2

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (2.35 p.m.): In speaking to the report of Estimates Committee A, I would like to make several comments regarding the Budget as a whole. The Estimates committee report focused upon one matter in the Treasury portfolio statement. Whilst the report expressed some concern about the presentation of detail, I believe that the inclusion of a footnote in relation to that matter, dealing with the question of rounding, would have satisfied the committee's concerns.

Having said that, it is interesting to note that there was no substantive criticism of the Treasury Estimates; nor, indeed, of the Budget as a whole. I think that demonstrates the soundness of the Budget. The Budget has delivered a record level of expenditure on important community services. In its second Budget, this Government has delivered the commitments that it made to the people of Queensland prior to the election last year. This has occurred in key areas such as disability services and our jobs plan—indeed, right across the various portfolios of the Government.

We have brought forward the key initiatives in relation to the Smart State and have put Queensland on track for a great future both socially and economically with the investment that we are making in relation to human resources and the emergent industries in information technology and biotechnology.

What we have is a Budget which consolidates the very substantial gains which we made over the course of the last 12 months. We faced very difficult economic circumstances in Queensland as a result of the Asian economic crisis impacting on a number of our export industries and tourism. That is why last year we were very conservative in our outlook with regard to growth. I am pleased to note that, with the achievement of 4.75% growth last year, Queensland outperformed the rest of the nation and, indeed, posted growth figures which were the envy of many nations around the world.

Over the last 10 years we have seen growth in this State average 4.7% per annum. This demonstrates the soundness of Queensland's economy. It is little wonder that people from interstate and overseas see Queensland as a State of opportunity. They see Queensland's enviable record as a generator of employment opportunities.

I am particularly proud of the fact that this year's Budget gives effect to each of the five principles which were promulgated as part of our Charter of Social and Fiscal Responsibility. As I said, this Budget has delivered on the issue of important social services across all portfolios. The Budget delivers on each and every one of the five fiscal principles. We deliver in relation to our competitive tax environment. Per capita taxation in Queensland remains well below the average of the other States. It is an important attractor of business investment and economic activity. Our delivery of an operating surplus in this Budget demonstrates our capacity to sustain a level of service provision, and that is important.

In terms of our capital provision, this Budget will deliver a record capital program. Last year was a record capital program of \$4.9 billion; this year's program, at \$5.1 billion, outstrips that. The important thing about it is that, to the extent that we need to borrow to support our capital program, the operating surplus in the Budget demonstrates our capacity to meet those ongoing obligations.

We continue to provide fully for the contingent liabilities of the Government in respect of workers' benefits, superannuation, retirement benefits and long service leave. All of that is provided for on an accrual basis. Importantly—and this is where I take issue with suggestions from the Opposition that there is somehow some fiscal flaw in the Budget—the bottom line in this Budget is the delivery of increased net worth for the State of Queensland. We are increasing our assets and increasing the net worth of Queensland. This year we will see net worth rise to \$58 billion—an enviable achievement, and one of which the people of Queensland can be justly proud.

Time expired.
