



Speech by

Mr G. HEALY

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Hansard 27 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee D
Report**

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (4.59 p.m.): It is a great pleasure to be able to rise to make a contribution to this debate in relation to Estimates Committee D and, in particular, Tourism, Sport and Racing. There is one matter that I raised last year, and I do not really know what the answer to this is. However, I just want to make a few comments about the actual procedure in relation to Estimates Committee D and the questioning procedure in relation to the portfolio of Tourism, Sport and Racing.

I raised this matter last year and, as I said, I really do not know the answer. This is perhaps the only portfolio where we have consistent shuffling of witnesses before the committee. I think we have five administered units and four departmental units in this portfolio. What seems to happen is that the people who are appearing to answer questions asked by members of the Opposition have to move back to the other part of the gallery while questions are being asked of departmental representatives. I believe this is the only portfolio where this occurs. There is a lot of time wasting on both the Government and the Opposition sides. Somewhere along the line we need to try to coordinate things a little better so that everyone receives a fair go. I think that is probably the main reason why I raise some concerns in relation to this issue. It would save a lot of time if that matter was addressed. Perhaps the people who are looking at the committee system for Estimates next year might be able to see if it can be somewhat streamlined.

I want to comment about some continued concerns that I have in relation to the portfolio of Tourism, Sport and Racing, and in particular in the area of sport and recreation. I remember asking the Minister about the Sport and Recreation Benefit Fund. I am somewhat concerned about rumours that are spreading around the place about the amount of money that is coming into the fund. The estimated revenue as outlined during the Estimates committee proceedings was \$63m, which represents about 23% of funding that comes from gaming machine revenue.

I know that a review is currently being conducted in relation to the gaming machine levy. At the moment the levy is fixed at 23%. I asked the Minister how did I know that he has not been duded by Treasury with the reduction in the amount of money that he would get for the fund, because the information that I had was that the Office of Gaming Regulation had calculated and forecast different amounts of money. The Minister's reply to me was that he knows that Treasury are such nice guys. I think I might have made some comment at the time that I thought the Minister might have been out in the sun for too long that particular day because, quite frankly, there is a concern in relation to this particular matter.

I have even more concerns when I consider a press release of 22 October from the Royal Queensland Bowls Association. The association was complaining about a slash in State Government funding of \$20,000 from the amount which the association received in the previous 12 months. In the media release the association said—

"It is likely the overall sports budget will be slashed by a massive \$20 million."

I do not know where the association obtained that figure. We need to be very vigilant in regard to these matters because a lot of sporting organisations rely on grants which come through the Minister's department by way of various programs. Those sporting organisations could be affected.

The other issue that concerns me relates to the Government's 6% equity return and how it is going to apply to the State's recreation centres. I know that the Treasurer, and other Ministers, continue to say that the 6% equity return will be returned to the departments this year. The value of our State recreation centres is \$33m. It does not surprise me that all these centres run at a loss. When the pressure is really on next year for departments to find that 6%, I am concerned about whether the Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing will look at the recreation centres and start to flog them off. The pressure is going to be on for the department to find the 6% equity return. I would hate to think that there will come a time when the recreation centres, which are spread right across the length and breadth of this State and which provide enormous opportunities for our young people, will have to be flogged off because Treasury is saying to the department, "We want that 6%." If the 6% is not returned in the year 2000-01 I can see some major problems. It does not matter whether the recreation centres are on the Gold Coast, Lake Tinaroo, Yeppoon, Tallebudgera, Storm King Dam or any of those areas—

Time expired.
