



Speech by

GRANT MUSGROVE

MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD

Hansard 28 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee G
Report**

Mr MUSGROVE (Springwood—ALP) (3.27 p.m.): I would like to commence my comments by acknowledging the tremendous amount of work done by the committee staff, in particular, David Thannhauser and his team who put in a tremendous amount of work and made the life of all committee members that much easier, particularly as we moved through the negotiation phase and where rulings were required on the admissibility or otherwise of particular questions.

I would also like to thank all members of the committee for their contribution. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the deputy chairman of the committee, the member for Indooroopilly, for his work. He certainly had a very clear understanding of the Standing Orders relating to the committee and was, in fact, the only non-Government committee member whose questions complied with the Standing Orders. Some people may refer to the honourable member as a pedant, but sometimes pedantry pays off.

Conversely, the contribution from the member for Maroochydore was of somewhat less value to the committee. The member was not an official part of the committee but was granted leave by all members of the committee to join the committee. Unfortunately, shortly after being granted that leave, she accused me of trying to gag the committee and generally carried on with the feigned outrage that honourable members get used to in this place, but I do not think that had a comfortable place in the life of the committee which all members worked hard to conduct in a spirit of cooperation and constructive comment. I remind that honourable member that she was there by leave and by agreement of all committee members. I resisted ruling that the committee debate her assertions about my chairmanship in private in the interest of an open and accountable committee.

I would like to thank all Ministers for their constructive contributions. I thank their personal staff and their departmental staff for the huge amount of work that they put into the preparations for the Estimates committee. I think it was demonstrated amply that all those departments are going ahead in great leaps and bounds and making a wonderful contribution to their respective portfolio areas. Answers to the committee were provided in an open and timely manner, even those that were perhaps somewhat onerous in the amount of detail they required.

Of course, I know that some members of the committee were perhaps a little disappointed when some of their questions were disallowed by me on points of procedure. I make the observation that, over time, a culture might have developed in this place where questions on notice do not comply with the Sessional Orders laid down by the Parliament. In particular, and I do not mean this by way of criticism, questions by the member for Noosa and the member for Crows Nest were ruled out under various Standing Orders. I can appreciate those members being a little disappointed with that. In future I think that a decision needs to be made that either the Sessional Orders are amended to allow greater flexibility in questions on notice or, alternatively, the chairmen of the various Estimates committees need to ensure strict compliance with Sessional Orders. Given the choice of an application of a culture developed over time and the adherence to the Sessional Orders laid down in this place, as chairman I believed that it was my role first and foremost to comply with the Sessional Orders.

Of course, these hearings are conducted at great cost and effort. I join with other members who have speculated that there may be a more cost-efficient mechanism for conducting these hearings. In particular, I would like to float the possibility that these hearings may be conducted while the House is sitting, particularly as these hearings are held in the Upper Chamber and not in the Legislative Assembly.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the great amount of work that has been done by the agencies that appeared before the committee in preparing their budget documents and their answers to the committee in the transfer to accrual budgeting.

Time expired.
