



Speech by

HOWARD HOBBS

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Hansard 30 November 1999

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (10.15 a.m.): I wish to advise this House about finance, Labor Party style. In a desperate need to fund the Budget, this Government raided departments of \$568m. This money was taken from departmental working funds. I wish to advise the House of the impact of these cuts on local government. Some \$26.9m was handed back to the Government and was thus lost to local government.

The Minister for Local Government, Mr Mackenroth, is a member of the Cabinet Budget Committee. He irresponsibly led an unwilling pack of Ministers to undertake these refunds to Treasury. One would have thought that a Minister with his experience would have realised the long-term consequences of his actions. That was money which the Minister's department may require this year if local government applications come in on time.

Mr MACKENROTH: I rise to a point of order. The member is misleading the House about what I have told him. I have told him on at least 15 occasions that if local governments ask for money, they will be paid. I do not know why the honourable member continues to mislead the House.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr HOBBS: The Minister's department may require this money this year if local government applications come in on time. Most importantly, how is the Minister going to fund local government next year and the year after when the Government has to find in excess of \$500m in order to catch up when other departments call on their funding? This money will have already been spent in the 1999-2000 financial year.

Minister Mackenroth has placed local government in a precarious financial position for the future. The Minister said that it would be okay because he was on the CBC. He said that he would fund any shortfalls. However, other Ministers may have other ideas. Mr Mackenroth will not be the Minister for Local Government forever. His tenure is only temporary. The positions of the Minister and the Government come up for review in one and a half years' time. The way this Government is performing, the prospect of it being returned is becoming very questionable.

Local government in Queensland has been aware of delays in the uptake of grants and subsidies. For some time, local government has put in train measures to speed up applications. As a result, the funding needs to be available. Many years ago, we did away with the strict guidelines—

Time expired.
