



Speech by

Hon. J. ELDER

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Hansard 27 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee A
Report No. 2**

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (2.56 p.m.): I thank the committee and particularly the chairman of the committee, the member for Logan, for his stewardship of Estimates Committee A. The way that the committee was conducted was very fruitful and very orderly. It was certainly a lot more orderly than other Estimates processes that I have been personally involved in.

The Opposition's minority report basically states that, in spending a further \$300,000, the Government inadequately meets the needs of our education services internationally. In other words, because of the downturn in the Asian economy and the drop in the number of Asian students who are coming to this country, we are held responsible. Extra funding to actually assist in growing new market opportunities, both within Asia and elsewhere overseas, is seen as being inadequate.

I went back and looked at the Budget allocations of the coalition Government. I found no new funds allocated to education services at any stage. In other words, they lived off the back of the Asian growth at the time and did not put any extra resources into facilitating and growing the education market. I find it absolutely galling to be criticised by the Opposition for finding, on top of the funds that we have already spent, additional funds of \$300,000 to employ an officer to target opportunities. In their term in Government, they did nothing to grow education opportunities for overseas students. At least we have recognised that we need to do more. Further funds were provided in this Budget to do that, through the development of the new markets that are emerging in Europe. A week ago I was in Italy doing just that. I have also been doing more to enhance opportunities for Asian-based students to take advantage of higher education facilities in Queensland. I find it galling to be criticised for finding new funds when the coalition Government did very little itself.

I then read in the report that there has supposedly been a freeze in project development. There has only ever been one freeze in this State. When the former Treasurer Joan Sheldon and the coalition Government came to power, they froze every project. They navel gazed for 12 months and, in the process, stalled the Queensland economy with subsequent job losses, an adverse impact on businesses and a lack of business growth. That has been the only freeze in this State. Setting up the Department of State Development has been a milestone and making sure that we have a department that responds to the needs of the portfolio has been a challenge. In terms of meeting that challenge successfully, we have also facilitated a number of projects.

To say that the Nathan dam or the SUDAW project is being delayed is an absolute furphy. Honourable members will recall that at election time they announced a dam and a railway line worth \$3 billion. There were no projects. No work was done to facilitate any of those projects. All of that work has had to be done by this Government. That has been the case with respect to a whole range of policy initiatives.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr ELDER: That is exactly true. The former Government announced a dam and there was not even an impact assessment process in place—not one. This Government has had to deliver that process. Nothing has changed in terms of the timetable. Members opposite are some of the biggest

peddlers of untruths in country Queensland today. They are absolutely appalling and they know it. They talk about projects.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr ELDER: Did the honourable member facilitate the development of the project in Toowoomba? No! That was done by my department and this Government. I will not cop a bar of the argument about freezes. We have brought forward all of those projects. The Millmerran Power Station, the WMC fertiliser plant, the PNG gas pipeline and Comalco—all of those projects are still being facilitated and driven by this department. To say that there has been a freeze is an absolute furphy. This Government has done more to create more jobs, opportunities and projects than was ever the case when members opposite were in Government. Austar recently announced that it will create 1,000 jobs on the Gold Coast. Members opposite crow long and loud about their one project—Boeing—which involved no major construction or infrastructure. Boeing's 200 jobs was their—

Mr Foley: Sleepless in Seattle, they were.

Mr ELDER: They were in the ice age.

Time expired.
