



Speech by

Mr J. HEGARTY

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

Hansard 27 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee D
Report**

Mr HEGARTY (Redlands—NPA) (5.50 p.m.): In rising to speak on the report of Estimates Committee D, I would like to put on the record, from the information contained in the Hansard of that meeting, my grave concerns about the lack of funding provided for the Department of Environment and Heritage and the Department of Natural Resources. It has been well canvassed in the debate so far that these departments, along with others, have experienced a shortfall in funding compared with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Department of State Development, which received enormous increases on the previous year's allocation.

I will touch first on the area of national parks. I refer to the recent disclosure that over 50,000 hectares of land has been acquired for State forest—25,000 hectares in 1997-98 and just over 30,000 hectares in 1998-99. That is commendable from an acquisition point of view if that land was under some sort of threat from development. But, as has been pointed out in contributions made to the debate so far, our national parks and State forests are under threat because of a lack of care as a result of the inability of the existing ranger force to adequately tend to them. While we continue to spend money on new acquisitions, the existing stock is under threat from neglect. I do not think that is a very prudent way of managing the Environment portfolio. The impact of weeds on those areas has been highlighted already. That is just one part of the problem being faced by this large State.

Although we heard a lot of rhetoric from Labor prior to its coming into office last year, as soon as it came to Government the same treatment as before was dished out in relation to the environment. The member for Cunningham highlighted that. Everything goes to pot, the money is withdrawn and the environment movement, which supports Labor in anticipation that it will do a better job than we might do, is disappointed. Of course, we are now seeing a repetition of the behaviour of the Goss Labor Government.

I am concerned about what is happening in Moreton Bay in my electorate. Most of us are aware that the Moreton Bay islands in the southern portion of the Moreton Bay Marine Park have been zoned for a large-scale residential development. There is a problem for the local government authority in relation to how it will constrain that development if all of the blocks that can be built upon are allowed to be developed. We see nothing in the allocation for the Department of Environment, which should be taking that issue up with the Minister for Local Government and the Treasurer, that would enable it to ensure that development of those islands is correctly planned before the marine park comes under threat. I draw to the attention of the Chamber the fact that just over \$1.4m is allocated in this year's Budget to manage that very important area. That is nowhere near adequate in the light of the sorts of problems that have to be addressed. I suggest to the Minister for Environment that he take this issue more seriously. He should go to the Treasurer and highlight the fact that it will be too late and that it will cost far too much money to remedy the situation if the area continues to be developed at the current rate. The local government authority is in no position to impose any restrictions other than those provided under the Integrated Planning Act.

Again, I am very disappointed in the amount of money that has been provided to the Environment Department, particularly in that area. I ask the Minister to look at the implementation of

further environmental restraints but, more importantly, to gain funding in the next Budget to address and protect this vital area on the doorstep of south-east Queensland, where so many people reside.

Time expired.
