



Speech by

**Hon. M. FOLEY**

**MEMBER FOR YERONGA**

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Hansard 27 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Estimates Committee B**

**Report**

**Hon. M. J. FOLEY** (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (3.36 p.m.): As the responsible Minister, I am pleased to give to this Parliament an account of the proposed budget as it seeks to address the big issues facing our justice system. We stand at a time when we have hundreds of people admitted to prison for fine defaulting, when there is a need for information technology to transform our courts system, and when we need to do so much better for child witnesses before the law and for child protection generally.

We are at a time when there is a crisis in access to legal aid for the poor and the disadvantaged. We are at a time when we need to have involvement of indigenous people in decision making in the justice system, when there are so many who are being brought before the courts and placed in prison. We are at a time when the law must rise to the great challenges of native title disputes in the mining and development areas. We are at a time when people with decision making disability require access to better and more user friendly means of having disputes resolved. That is the basis on which this budget has been formed.

We see \$20.7m allocated for the collection of court imposed fines and penalties for statutory infringements. We see \$1.5m allocated for the information technology upgrade in the higher courts. We see the Government honouring its promise to have \$5m extra in the legal aid kitty at a time when the Federal coalition Government has slashed \$2m a year, creating enormous hardship in the area of family law. We see over \$700,000 being made available in the budget to assist in child protection and with respect to child witnesses. We see in the budget provision being made for the involvement of indigenous people in the justice system and in particular with regard to the convening of courts by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander JPs in remote communities. We see provision for the establishment of the Land and Resources Tribunal and we see provision for the Guardianship and Administration Tribunal.

What do we hear from the Opposition in relation to the great issues of the day around which the Parliament should be debating the appropriation of funds? We hear a complaint that there was no representative from the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions present. Maybe members opposite do not recognise Mr Royce Miller, QC, because he was there. They complain in their usual carping, unfair, scurrilous way about matters concerning the director-general and continue this squalid vendetta against an honest and decent public servant. They raise issues relating to the drugs courts and omit even to ask the responsible Minister, the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, in respect of the testing.

One thing that the member for Warwick did not do was to give an apology to the people of Queensland for the barefaced untruth which he told. He misled the people of Queensland in his false claim that funds for counselling and support services for victims of crime were to be slashed in the Budget. It was false. He published it in the Courier-Mail the very next day, and he well knew that was untrue. It was spelled out in the Budget that it was transferred from this department to another department. The member caused considerable disquiet and upset, and he should have apologised on the public record.

Let me turn to the arts. We do not hear from the lips of the member for Indooroopilly the word "regions", nor do we hear the word "youth" or the words "Aboriginal culture". Yet those are the very things that are the big issues confronting our arts policy, and that is why provision is made for them in the Budget. We do not hear from the member for Indooroopilly about the need to boost jobs in the arts industry. That is why we are investing in film—so that we do not have to depend simply upon overseas productions, and so that we can nurture the local film industry.

I am surprised that the member has the shame to even mention the cultural centre. That is the one that they announced for \$320m, and Mrs Sheldon did not even put a cracker in the Budget when she announced it. And when that was exposed, they said, "We will take it out of the Treasurer's reserve." What a joke! And these are the very people who shamelessly fail to attack the Commonwealth Government for its scandalous underfunding of orchestras.

Time expired.

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