



Speech by

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard 27 October 1999

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

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.42 p.m.): I do not think anyone believes this Premier any more in respect of any of the half-truths or mistruths that he peddles in this place. Let us look at native title. The main delay in resolving native title was that the Premier so comprehensively bungled his State-based native title legislation that six months later he had to introduce hundreds of pages of amendments. That is what has delayed the resolution of outstanding native title matters.

The sort of half-truth we just heard is what we expect from a Premier who has propelled this State into a \$1.2 billion deficit. Standard and Poors and Treasury agree on that number. We had this incredible excuse in respect of the increase in his own department. The Premier gets \$59m more, representing a 41% increase, in the Budget allocation to his department, not from the previous coalition Government to his Government but from his Budget last year to his Budget this year.

All of those projects the Premier referred to such as South Bank were in the Forward Estimates of the final Budget handed down by the previous coalition Government because they were coalition initiatives. So after the famous Beattie stealth tax is taken into account what we have is an increase of about 3.5% for Health and Education and an increase of 0.1% for Police, while the Premier gets \$59m extra—a massive 41% increase. What breathtaking hypocrisy from the member for Brisbane Central!

The matter I wish to raise is a very serious one. We sought explanation from the Premier in the Estimates committee about a potential corruption in terms of the Public Service appointment process. I referred to the manner in which a deal was done with City Hall that meant that Ms Helen Ringrose was appointed as Deputy Director-General of the Premier's Department. The appointment was very unusual and quite unprecedented. She was appointed, but then her appointment was revoked and she was then appointed to the very same position under special contractual arrangements which are unique.

In response to Estimates committee questioning, the Premier confirmed this series of events and disclosed that this was to ensure that Ms Ringrose could be paid the same amount as she received from her former employer. So presumably if she came from Coles Myer, despite the fact that the position was advertised at one level she would have got what Coles Myer was paying for her. We have a situation where Ms Ringrose now has this special deal—\$140,000 salary, \$11,000 market allowance, a performance bonus of up to 15% of her salary and all other benefits as if she had been appointed as an SES3 officer. So she will be taking home \$193,000 when the position was advertised at a lower level and people applied for it at that lower level. If the Premier were honest, he would have advertised this position for what he is now paying instead of undertaking a secret deal. There are similarities between this case and the recent Criminal Justice Commission investigation into the Fire Commissioner and the job that was allegedly created. That resulted in the Fire Commissioner admitting to official misconduct.

I do not believe that the answers provided by the Premier are good enough. I believe that there has been a serious breach of due and proper procedure. I am not aware of any other Queensland public servant being paid a market allowance. With the exception of some directors-general, I am aware

of no other senior Queensland public servants who are being paid a salary bonus. Ms Ringrose's remuneration is equivalent to that of most chief executives. The deputy director-general's position was independently evaluated as being worth an SES3 pay level, yet the Government is now paying this person, who may well be capable, up to \$55,000 a year more than the position was evaluated as being worth.

I contend that this appointment is a rot. I contest that there are massive irregularities in respect of this matter. The only response we get from the Premier is that I am a woman hater. I would be asking these questions regardless of who was appointed because it is not the person that is the issue; it is the process that is the issue. The Premier has been given every opportunity to respond. He has failed to do so. In light of his failure to do so, I will this afternoon be lodging a formal complaint with the Chairman of the Criminal Justice Commission in respect of the Premier's involvement in this matter.

Time expired.
