



Speech by

Mr SANTO SANTORO

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Hansard 28 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee F
Report**

Mr SANTORO (Clayfield—LP) (2.51 p.m.): I reiterate the appreciation that I included in my statement of reservations for the good work performed by the officers of the committee and the professional chairmanship of the member for Nudgee. I think that it is fair to say that the 1999-2000 budget for DETIR is the first genuine departmental budget of Minister Braddy and the Beattie Labor Government. It is a budget through which we can measure the performance of the Minister and his Government against promises that he made prior to the last State election.

I will make a few comparisons. Firstly, the contribution from the honourable member for Gympie certainly showed the efficacy of the coalition's employment and training policies. The honourable member for Gympie commenced to outline the employment record of the previous coalition Government. In common with a couple of other members, the honourable member who has just preceded me castigated the coalition Government for not having a Minister for Employment. The Ministers of the previous Government were all Ministers responsible for employment growth, and the figures for employment growth of the previous coalition Government speak for themselves. In terms of employment generation, we were the leading State, and that record speaks for itself.

On 31 March 1998, the national apprenticeship and traineeship figures were released and showed that 183,000 people were in training, with Queensland accounting for more than 44,000 of the total. When one considers that Queensland's population was at that time around 18% of the national total, the apprentice and trainee numbers at 23.9% was an excellent endorsement of coalition policies at work.

In terms of the building industry, the Minister has often claimed that the growth in apprenticeships and traineeships is the result of his Government's policies. That is simply not true. The statistics for the period June 1998 to November 1998 indicate quite clearly that the most dramatic growth in new approvals was occurring well before any of the Labor Government's employment and training initiatives had any chance of influencing the training prospects of apprentices and trainees. In mid July 1998, new approvals for apprentices were 12.6%, which was an increase on the rate the previous year, while building industry new apprenticeships approvals were up 32.5% and traineeships were up by 68%. Clearly, the turnaround in apprenticeship numbers in the building and construction industry was well and truly under way during the time of the coalition Government and certainly afterwards. Yesterday, the Minister again made that statement in the Parliament. It is not surprising that it received absolutely no coverage whatsoever, because all the major sections of the media know that what the Minister is peddling is certainly not true. That is the reason why the Minister's statement yesterday did not get any coverage whatsoever.

I wish to turn now to several other aspects of the department's budget. I refer to the sale of assets. In Opposition, the Labor Party and the unions campaigned heavily against the sale of assets, particularly TAFE Queensland assets. In Government, the Minister has announced the sale of \$34m worth of assets. Two of the sites to go are Coorparoo TAFE and the horticultural campus at Oxford Park. I heard one honourable member speak about the TAFE facilities at Oxford Park. That is one that is to go. How well I remember the vicious and dishonest campaigns

mounted by unions and members opposite against the imaginary sale of those assets by the former coalition Government. Under this Government, they are going to go.

In relation to Mr Gerry Murphy, I am not convinced by the Minister's arguments. There is a clear conflict of interest in the appointment of that individual to WorkCover. That is what I have been told by stakeholders and that is what I have been told by the industry. That image of a conflict of interest will just not go away. In terms of the increase in premiums for WorkCover, I acknowledge and continue to support the introduction of experience-based rating and premium setting. That was one of my very real, proud achievements in workers compensation reforms. However, the Minister and his department have fiddled the "F" factor of the equation. Its application has been altered by the WorkCover board and the current Government. That has led to the massive increase in premiums, but I will say more about that later on.

In Opposition, the Labor Party and also the unions campaigned heavily for an end to VERs. In Government, they sing a different tune. In answer to a question on notice, the Minister informed me that, this financial year, WorkCover expects via the VER process to dispense with 208 staff at a cost of \$5.8m. If members look at my statement of reservation, they would see that I also advise that in 1998-99, 86 employees accepted VERs at a cost of \$33, which should of course be \$3.3m. So much for job security right across DETIR, not to mention the possible redeployment of 200 staff members at the Moreton Institute of TAFE!

Of course, the Minister and other people object to the fact that we mentioned Madonna Jarrett, who is simply a Labor mate. There is no denying that. She might have been competent in her work and she may have even given some good advice, but it is not reflected in the legislation, which is a retrograde piece of legislation. All we are doing is what honourable members opposite used to do when they were in Opposition. At that time, they used to accuse the coalition Government of appointing friends of the Liberal Party or the National Party. This Government has done precisely the same.

Time expired.
