



Speech by

## Mr BRUCE LAMING

### MEMBER FOR MOOLOOLAH

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Hansard 23 August 2000

#### APPROPRIATION BILL, ESTIMATES COMMITTEE C

**Mr LAMING** (Mooloolah—LP) (3.06 p.m.): Firstly, I acknowledge the assistance provided by the parliamentary staff, in particular Mr Rob Hansen, and the cooperation of all other committee members during the deliberations of Estimates Committee C.

I join with other Opposition members in expressing my disappointment with many aspects of the Beattie Government's 1999-2000 Budget. There is a temptation to get involved in some of the detail and miss some of the more obvious shortcomings. The ALP was narrowly elected in 1998 by holding out false hope to many Queenslanders who were understandably concerned about the high level of unemployment. I believe all honourable members have concerns about unemployment generally and in their own electorates in particular. To claim an achievable goal of 5% unemployment and then do little more than just talk about it while missing so many opportunities to contribute towards that outcome will soon be seen for what it really is. This failure will, I am sure, be taken into account at the next election.

Another aspect that seems to run through all portfolios is the outright refusal of Ministers to provide the Estimates committees with any information regarding performance bonuses to directors-general. Such questions are legitimate and answers should have been made available. Estimates Committee C was advised that the Premier would answer that question. Perhaps we will find out that information today.

Considerable discussion occurred in Estimates Committee C in relation to the Roma Street parklands development. I note with interest the list of names suggested for the redevelopment site that was tabled by the Premier yesterday. I share a couple of these with honourable members. There was Beattie Blue Bushland and the Bower of Beattie, each fortunately—

**Mr Lucas:** This is a really positive and constructive contribution from the shadow Minister.

**Mr LAMING:** I knew that the member for Lytton would appreciate that. Each fortunately received one vote. There were a number of good suggestions, including that of Neville Bonner Park, which I believe would gain considerable support.

**Mr Schwarten:** We have already named a building after him.

**Mr LAMING:** I am aware of that. Also in relation to the Roma Street parklands the committee asked questions relating to the involvement of the Smithsonian Institution. This has been the subject of considerable media coverage and ministerial statements, but when asked the Minister was unable to give a firm response on location, costs and construction timetable. While this proposal has significant merit, it was surprising that the committee could only get an assurance that negotiations were continuing. This is despite the Premier's claims on 28 July last year that the Government had already sealed the deal.

The issue of prequalification for contractors on Government work was another issue canvassed by the committee. While the concept of prequalification is good, it is disappointing for the committee to be told that there is not a higher level of financial accountability for Government work than that provided by the BSA for general contracting. The head contractors realise that their situation is financially secure when working for the Government and this level of security of payment should be extended through the prequalification system to subcontractors.

Much has been made by the Minister of his interpretation of the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement payments from Canberra. This agreement was negotiated and signed off by the Beattie Government. Then the Government proceeded to use the CSH agreement to belt the Federal Government. It complained that Queensland was going to be financially disadvantaged to the tune of \$37m over the four-year term of the agreement because of the Commonwealth's unwillingness to index the CSH agreement.

**Mr Swarten:** It is \$90m.

**Mr LAMING:** No, that is the GST that the Minister was talking about. The Minister should concentrate.

**Mr Swarten** interjected.

**Mr LAMING:** Yes, it is. A few inquiries would have shown that the CSH agreements have never been indexed since their inception back in 1945. The members opposite should listen to this. So the Minister has been trying to bag the Howard Government for adopting the very same procedures as those adopted by Prime Ministers Whitlam, Hawke and Keating. I do not recall any complaint when they were in Government, but maybe there are different rules when dealing with a Labor Government than when dealing with a coalition Government. There was not a whimper from the members opposite when there were Labor Prime Ministers in office.

Similarly, the Minister has attacked the efficiency dividend aspect of the CSH agreement that he signed off on. However, what about his own administrative savings payments to Treasury totalling \$41.3m over three years coming straight out of the Housing budget? Overall, the Minister's own State matching grants to housing have fallen dramatically.

Time expired.

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