



Speech by
**Mr DENVER
BEANLAND**

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPIILLY

Hansard 23 August 2000

APPROPRIATION BILL, ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (11.42 a.m.): I rise in this debate, firstly, to thank the staff of the committee, particularly Mr Stephen Finnimore, who is the research director of the committee, and other staff members for the work they did in support of the committee. I thank the committee members also. I want to talk about a few issues in relation to the matters covered by Estimates Committee A, particularly in the portfolio of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care and Disability Services.

First of all, I want to touch upon the issue of bonuses paid to directors-general. It is quite obvious that significant dollars are involved here—the amounts contained in this budget. In reply to a question I asked, the Minister indicated that money was contained within her departmental votes for bonuses paid to directors-general. But the Minister refused point blank to specifically indicate the amounts contained in either last year's budget or this year's budget. So we do not know how much was paid to the director-general by way of bonuses as there is no indication of that in this year's budget. The Minister's answer was that the Premier would answer this question later. However, I can tell honourable members that the Premier did not answer these questions when he was questioned by the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party. In fact, the Premier again refused to answer the question and skated around the issue.

It makes a farce of the Estimates committee process when Ministers are properly questioned about funds contained within estimates and the Minister refuses to answer, and that is exactly what happened in this portfolio. No-one is sure how much money—whether it was \$2,000, \$5,000, \$20,000, \$29,000 or no money—was contained in the estimates. There was only an indication given by the Minister that there were some moneys there and that moneys would be paid out of her portfolio. I believe it shows the Minister's quite obvious contempt for the Estimates process by not answering that particular question. To simply indicate that the Premier will do it, and then the Premier does not do it, is a farce. What is the point of having Estimates committees if these questions are not answered? After all, the whole purpose of holding Estimates committees is to get answers from Ministers in relation to funds that are contained within those departmental votes.

There is no question that there were funds for bonuses to be paid to directors-general contained within the votes. The Minister indicated that that was the case but then refused to indicate how much and tried to fob it off to the Premier, and of course the Premier fobbed it off yet again. It indicates quite clearly that there is an iron curtain of secrecy surrounding those bonuses paid to directors-general. I believe that the Estimates committee is the proper place for that information to be provided. The Minister indicated that they were there—and she ought to have provided them—but she said that somehow it was the Premier's responsibility and that she was not going to indicate exactly what was contained within the votes.

This is a portfolio of non-achievement, unfortunately. In at least 13 areas which we covered the Minister had not performed in both previous years and the current year; commitments are not being met. It is all very well making commitments to the Parliament, but then those commitments were not met in the previous year. Some of them go back to the year before that, and it follows through that they have not been met the year after and then the year after that. No doubt there are a lot more areas in which commitments have not been met. Had there been time to question the Minister, the number

could have risen. But there were at least 13 areas on which the Minister was questioned in which the Minister failed to deliver in the portfolio and failed to honour the commitments to the Parliament for which funds were allocated. There were indications in the previous budgets that something was going to occur, but those commitments given to the Parliament were not met.

One such commitment was the intensive broad-based consultation that was going to occur in relation to a comprehensive quality framework for services for the disability sector. That simply did not occur. The Minister said it was a challenge, a bit difficult, and that she had not got around to getting it right. Therefore, clearly it had not occurred. Even though the Minister made it quite clear in the budget documents that this had been going on for two years, that commitment still had not been honoured.

One course, one of the greatest farces is the output statements. What happened this year? The Minister got into trouble last year, so this year we had a whole host of new performance measurements in the output statements so that there could be no comparison with the previous years. What a farce that made of these statements! What a farce they have become! After all, if the Minister keeps changing the output performance measurements, there is no way there will be comparisons from one year to the next. It is a very safe way for the Minister not to get caught out.

Time expired.
