



Speech by

**DESLEY BOYLE**

**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

---

Hansard 23 August 2000

**APPROPRIATION BILL, ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E**

**Ms BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (11.32 a.m.): I am pleased to speak to report No. 2. As Chair of the committee, in speaking to report No. 1 I have already paid my compliments to both Hansard and the committee secretariat for their tremendous skill and support. I do that again on this occasion. I also ask honourable members to note that, as Chair, I was pleased to ensure that members of the Opposition had more than their fair share of time to question the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer. Approximately 60% of the time was given to members of the Opposition.

I particularly pay compliments at this stage to the Premier and to the staff of his department and various agencies whose budgets were under close examination. I mention, however, that I was not impressed by the Auditor-General's behaviour on the occasion of our committee hearing. He used the occasion to impress publicly upon us his concern over his budget. Our system is, as he would be well aware, that it is the Premier or the responsible Ministers who are under examination by the committee and that Estimates hearings are not an opportunity for any director-general or CEO to come and push his or her agenda. I also wish to have it noted that there would be no director-general who would say that he or she would not wish more in their budget.

**Mr CONNOR:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is confusing a parliamentary officer with a director-general. The Auditor-General is a parliamentary officer and is not answerable to the Government.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There is no point of order. I understand the member's point, but there is no point of order.

**Ms BOYLE:** Any CEO of any organisation would of course want more. It is so that there are many more things to which we as a Government—any Government for that matter—could allocate money.

I was indeed impressed with the Premier's grasp of the questions around the Auditor-General's budget and with his decision, clearly expressed to the committee, that a review will take place in six months to further clarify how indeed the Auditor-General and his office are able to perform their duties without risk to their integrity.

I pay my compliments to the Treasurer. The committee examined him, his officers and his budget over a long period of time. His answers to committee questions were fast and detailed and showed a very thorough understanding of his portfolio. As an observer of that process as well as a participant, I must say that it was a means of increasing the confidence one has in the Treasurer of this State and in his capability of managing a complex Budget.

I pay my compliments to the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade. I note in the reservation statement by Opposition members that the overseas student numbers issue is again expressed. As Chair of the committee it was clear to me that the particular member of the committee who wished to question the Deputy Premier on this topic came to the committee with a political agenda and that no answer to any of his questions was about to shake his point of view in that matter. I am pleased to have the opportunity, nonetheless, to report that his view is indeed a biased one.

Cairns, as some honourable members will already know, is home for a six-month period—sometimes shorter and sometimes longer—to many overseas students. We have a very fine industry working group, looked after by the Cairns Regional Economic Development Corporation, which is funded by the Department of State Development and which is growing overseas student numbers in Cairns, despite the trends mentioned by the Deputy Premier at the committee hearings. They are managing to succeed, despite competition that is causing difficulty with the overseas student market all over Australia, not just in Queensland.

I comment on the Opposition's statement of reservation, which contained an accusation of ministerial arrogance. This is indeed an unusual interpretation of the proceedings, as anybody who was present would be able to attest. Far from it: there was no arrogance on the part of the Premier or either of the Ministers. The quotation in the reservation statement is taken out of context. The comment was made jokingly, not arrogantly. In fact, all of the Ministers reporting to the committee were patient, sometimes with questions which were obscure and which carried clear political agendas that would not be shaken, despite hard factual information presented by the Ministers. It was my privilege and my pleasure indeed to chair the committee and I thank the Parliament for that opportunity.

---