



Speech by

Mr M. ROWELL

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard 23 August 2000

APPROPRIATION BILL, ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (11.33 a.m.): It was with great disappointment that I had to put in a dissenting report in respect of the Estimates for the DPI. I believe that a lot of what is happening within the organisation is not in the best interests of people in primary industries. In fact, I believe that the DPI is turning into a consumer-based organisation rather than one that assists groups that produce something like \$6 billion worth of farm gate products for this State. There seems to be more interest in slow-growing grass—grass that needs mowing only three to four times a year. That is extremely disappointing. Primary industries right across the State are very important to the economy of Queensland.

One of the issues that I was also very concerned about was the \$2m for the tick inspection process that will now be passed over to organisations that are not directly under the control of the DPI. It is extremely important in relation to cattle exported from Queensland that we can be certain that ticks or other issues are not detrimental to that trade. This is a market that we have established over a long period and which we need to foster.

Another major concern is the closure of the semen laboratories at Wacol and Biloela. I would like to know what has happened to these sites—the equipment and the buildings. Will this money simply go back into the pockets of Treasury? It is disappointing that only \$900,000 in new money was actually spent on capital works projects through the DPI. I raise also the issue of forestry plantations for south-east Queensland. The Budget documents state that there is \$8.9m in new money for the year 2000-01. But in effect \$3.4m of this money was spent in the 1999-2000 year, and only \$5.5m will be made available in the year 2000-01.

There appears to be no allocation for the 200 jobs that have been foreshadowed and promised. That is a major issue. The question in relation to the performance bonuses for DGs was not answered by Mr Palaszczuk, who said that we would have to go to the Premier for an answer to this question. Yet Minister Spence said that the performance bonus was going to come from a departmental allocation. There seems to be a lot of controversy within Government as to where these performance allocations are coming from.

QRAA is a lame duck under this Government. QRAA, which was a separate entity in the Treasury, has now been moved over to DPI. But not the full complement of \$60m-odd in funding came across with it. Only about \$2.3m has come across with it, with \$57.7m of it taken out of QRAA and now in the grip of Treasury. Of course, DPI can make an application to Treasury, but sometimes getting money from Treasury is like pulling teeth.

In my remaining minute I wish to address the dairy industry. As I said in a statement this morning, this industry is suffering considerable problems, in particular in the areas west of Toowoomba, down to Fassifern, and in Biloela, Kingaroy and surrounding regions. Those areas are particularly dry. It is a major concern how those people will travel, particularly with deregulation and the dry spell they are now facing. They have to feed their cattle. They have to make sure that they can produce milk. The dairying asset owned by these people is their superannuation. That is now in jeopardy.

Time expired.
