



Speech by

CHRISTINE SMITH

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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APPROPRIATION BILLS [ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E]

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (12.53 p.m.): I was very pleased to be a part of Estimates Committee E. I thank Minister Stephen Robertson and Minister Wendy Edmond for giving me a great deal of support and encouragement throughout the process. As a new member of parliament, being part of the hearings gave me a welcome insight into both departments and I learned a great deal from the experience.

During the consideration of expenditure for the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, the question of identified shortcomings in the body corporate and community management legislation was raised. This is of particular concern in my electorate. The minister advised the hearing that the act has been reviewed by an independent body. A large number of submissions from a wide group of interested parties were considered. The review committee then recommended changes which aimed to address these deficiencies. Drafting of amendments to the act has commenced, and the aim is to have the draft available for public comment later this year.

Since the review was completed, public concern has been raised about the role and performance of body corporate managers. There have been allegations made of unethical conduct by some, and there have been calls for body corporate managers to be regulated. The hearing heard that the Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines is working with the Minister for Fair Trading to examine the best possible way to achieve regulation of body corporate managers, with the aim of bringing a proposal before the government before the end of this year. This is an area of much concern to many of my constituents and I commend both ministers on their dedication to solving what is a very difficult question.

Foreign ownership of land is an issue that often sparks vigorous community debate. At times there have been outrageous claims about how much of the Gold Coast is owned by Japanese investors. I was surprised to learn that only 0.84 per cent of the state's total land area is held by foreign-owned interests. There are currently 122 foreign countries recorded as landowners, the top five being the USA, the Netherlands, the UK, Japan and Canada.

I now turn to health. Record spending of \$4.06 billion, as well as \$364 million in capital works, was announced for 2001-02. Health spending is a major component of the state's total budget. How the government decides to distribute this money has a huge impact on the lives of our constituents. It is an extremely difficult and thankless task, and I congratulate Minister Wendy Edmond for her commitment and hard work in discharging her responsibilities.

As a Gold Coaster, I welcome the provision of a magnetic resonance imaging unit for the Gold Coast Hospital. The MRI machine will save many patients the hardship and heartache of travelling to Brisbane in order to access this service. The Beattie Labor government believes it is essential that the latest in technological advances is available to all our public hospitals. Equity of access according to need and not the ability to pay is the principle on which this budget is based.

The needle availability program is part of this government's harm minimisation strategy on drugs. A positive sign is that for the first time in many years demand for needles is decreasing. This is an encouraging sign as the battle continues for the hearts and minds of our young people. The needle availability program also provides less controversial services. People living with diabetes are well supported by a new initiative. The Commonwealth subsidises insulin syringes, but consumers were

required to contribute a co-payment. This government has now removed that burden from people with diabetes and the co-payment will now be covered by Queensland Health.

To ensure the best possible care for our children, more than \$1.5 million has been allocated for paediatric services and equipment this year. A further 22 school-based youth health workers will also be employed. This service is very important as schools are the key for health risks to be identified for children whose parents are unable or unwilling to seek medical assistance.

Since the disgraceful cessation of the Commonwealth Dental Health Program, access to services has become a matter of major concern. Approximately 100,000 additional people have become eligible for this scheme since 1999. This government has done everything within its power to provide for those services to remain reasonably available. This year the government has committed an extra \$5 million to treat those people waiting the longest. Many Gold Coast residents fall into this category and this money will allow for the treatment of an additional 16,500 people.

I thank the chairman of Estimates Committee E, Jim Pearce, for his stewardship, and my fellow committee members and members of the secretariat for their patience and good humour. I am happy to commend this report to the House.
