



Speech by

**JOHN KINGSTON**

**MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH**

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Hansard 2 August 2001

**APPROPRIATION BILLS [ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D]**

**Dr KINGSTON** (Maryborough—Ind) (12.27 p.m.): I was not on Estimates Committee D, which disappointed me a little as I am particularly interested in environmental issues and the resulting expenditure. I wish to speak about two points. But before I do, I would like to say to the member for Townsville that last week, because the Minister for Primary Industries could not be present, I officiated at a fire-fighting competition at Tuan forestry. I was extremely impressed despite the fact that some of my friends were pronounced dead!

The first point I wish to speak about is the presence of feral animals in national parks. During a recent search for a missing bushwalker, the heat-sensing devices on search helicopters were registered inoperable because of the presence of so many wild pigs. Those sensors cannot distinguish between a wild pig and a human body. The main issue I wish to address is expenditure within the Department of Environment that I regard as window-dressing. Worse, it is expenditure that has not been subjected to a rigorous cost-benefit analysis. The example I wish to use concerns a recent decision to install a solar/wind power generating system at Sandy Cape on Fraser Island at an estimated cost of \$100,000.

The Sandy Cape lighthouse has been solar powered for some years. The houses, which have one of the best views in the world, are now used to provide temporary accommodation for weather recorders and intermittent accommodation for national parks rangers, including rangers who have committed media blunders and have to be kept out of sight for two weeks.

The minister claims that the environmental measures taken at Sandy Cape will save money and will reduce the potential for serious environmental damage from carrying bulk fuel along rough national park tracks and the eastern beach. But the practical facts are, firstly, that Sandy Cape has 19,000 litres of diesel storage capacity; secondly, the diesel truck makes only one beach trip per year carrying 11,000 litres; thirdly, even with the solar/wind generator, one truck trip a year will be necessary to carry a back-up 4,000 litres of fuel. So for the expenditure of \$100,000 we have a solar/wind generator—and I am very much in favour of alternative power sources—which will save \$5,000 a year but will not decrease the traffic on the beach.

The government has said that it indulges only in responsible, well considered expenditure. I am afraid that I cannot consider this expenditure as such. In fact, I think it is expenditure on fashionable technology which is attractive to a few zealots and if an economic analysis were made it would be proven uneconomic.

I welcome the Premier's comments this morning concerning the Chevron pipeline. I think he demonstrated that he understands the issues of cost-benefit analysis and the impact of a very slow depreciation schedule. With respect to the minister, I think that the Premier was correct in his comments and I think that the installation at Sandy Cape is uneconomic even though I strongly support alternative power sources.

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