



Speech by

JOHN KINGSTON

MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

Hansard 2 August 2001

APPROPRIATION BILLS [ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E]

Dr KINGSTON (Maryborough—Ind) (12.58 p.m.): I was grateful to be a member of Estimates Committee E, which was particularly well run. I fully support the congratulations already given by the member for Callide. Concerning Health, I intend to touch on only three things. First, I congratulate Dr Rob Stable on how well organised he was. I just hope if I am in any controversial situations I have somebody of his calibre behind me. Second, the dissatisfaction with staffing at the Maryborough Hospital continues. Third, the doubt about the structural soundness of the Hervey Bay Hospital has not yet been addressed, although that is not a duty of the Health Department.

During the estimates committee hearing I tried to emphasise the serious lack of well-trained, experienced natural resource people within DNR, particularly to cope with the vegetation legislation. Despite the reassurances of the director-general, whose intentions I trust, I am not convinced that lengthy decision delays will not occur. I will illustrate that by an actual example.

A constituent of mine had signed a contract to purchase a property near Kumbia, provided that the vegetation legislation mapping was checked and corrected and was of a nature that allowed him to develop the property. The current maps showed the vegetation as remnant, meaning that he could not farm that property. In fact, the vegetation was regrowth. The botanist from Gympie—and I stress that there are only two botanists to service south-east Queensland—inspected the property and confirmed that the vegetation was, in fact, regrowth. But to change the maps involves activity by the Herbarium, and it is understandable that that cannot be done rapidly.

Here we have a vendor, a seller and two firms of solicitors all waiting on a verdict. What occurred in this instance was that there was a delay of more than six weeks and a theoretical breach—or an actual breach—of the contract and thus the potential invoking of penalties of contract. To exacerbate the situation, the DNR wrote a letter saying that the vegetation was remnant, but it posted it to the vendor's family at Kumbia, and mail delivery at Kumbia takes over a week. When I was asked to intervene, a very obliging DNR officer in Bundaberg rang and then faxed both solicitors, and the situation was clarified. But the contract had already expired, so a new contract had to be drawn up, and more legal expenses were incurred.

I suggest that, in these days when contracts depend on the decisions and actions of the DNR and the vegetation legislation officials, they resort to faxes and emails and be aware of the additional costs that they potentially can cause people.
