



Speech by  
**Hon. NITA  
CUNNINGHAM**

**MEMBER FOR BUNDABERG**

---

Hansard 2 August 2001

**APPROPRIATION BILLS [ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D]**

**Hon. J. I. CUNNINGHAM** (Bundaberg—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Planning) (11.41 a.m.): I will start by thanking Estimates Committee D members, particularly the chairman, the member for Mackay, and the deputy chairman, the member for Warrego. I also thank the parliamentary staff, Hansard, my director-general, departmental staff and the staff of my office. These hearings make a lot of work for us all and I appreciate everyone's contribution to this democratic process.

During the three-hour hearing I was asked more than 70 questions covering a broad cross-section of issues, including supplementary questions and some questions that really did not relate to the budget for my department at all. As I said during the hearing, this year's Labor budget has been a very positive one for the Department of Local Government and Planning and for councils throughout Queensland. I am very pleased to note that there was no statement of reservation from the opposition members of the committee in relation to my portfolio. I believe that is probably a true reflection of the fact that the budget for the Department of Local Government and Planning was indeed a positive one.

In 2001-02 the department will have a total budget of \$201 million, including \$177 million for local government grants and subsidies, which leaves a departmental operating budget of \$24 million. In addition to that funding, the department will administer a further \$284.4 million in grants and subsidies. I am pleased to be able to inform the House that the budget for 2001-02 will remain at the same level as for the previous financial year, after the arrangements for natural disaster relief funds that are allocated to meet actual requirements are taken into account.

The department's budget includes additional funding for a number of projects. They are: \$1 million over three years for the education and training of local governments to enable them to play an active role in the National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality; \$1 million over two years to improve fire safety standards for existing high-risk buildings; and \$1 million over the next two years for the implementation of the Integrated Planning Act reform. This money has been allocated to meet the extra costs the department will face in implementing those reforms. It has not been allocated for distribution to individual councils.

My department is providing substantial assistance to councils in order for them to meet the March 2003 deadline to have IPA-compliant planning schemes in place. That assistance includes the development of a model planning scheme, which will reduce the amount of time councils need to spend on their plans. That will be completed by the end of this month.

The assistance also includes the development of other guidelines; the review of infrastructure provisions; proactively engaging councils and state agencies through workshops and meetings to provide input to planning schemes; working with state agencies to identify their interests; providing training and advice; and the preparation of an integrated summary of the state's development assessment requirements pursuant to IPA and related legislation and regulations. Having these plans in place prior to the March 2003 deadline is top priority, and my department is providing enormous assistance to councils to reach their deadline.

During the hearing the member for Warrego asked me how much the state government as a whole gives to local governments. The member mentioned this in his speech a few minutes ago. I have to say that I am responsible for the Department of Local Government and Planning and it is not appropriate for me to comment about the budgets of other departments. However, I have given the

member an undertaking to make inquiries of other ministers and to pass on any relevant information received.

Councils throughout Queensland are delighted with the outcome of the federal assistance grants for this year. Funds will be available again to councils under the many existing state programs. My department will continue to assist councils with planning and applications, and new legislation dealing with the IPA review amendments and dangerous dogs will be before the House by the end of the year.

It will be a busy year for us all and a positive year of challenges and opportunities for local government in Queensland. Again I thank the members of Estimates Committee D for their contribution to the hearings.

The member for Warrego spoke about improving processes at estimates hearings. I was surprised to hear his comment about long, drawn-out answers. I have a very well-earned reputation for short speeches and I thought that would have been noticed in those hearings.

**Mr Hobbs:** I was talking about the other ministers.

**Mrs NITA CUNNINGHAM:** I understand that. I note his concerns that the IPA plans will not be completed, but we are certainly making it a priority.

---