



Speech by

CHRISTINE SMITH

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Hansard 31 July 2002

APPROPRIATION BILLS—ESTIMATES B

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (3.17 p.m.): I was very pleased to be part of Estimate Committee B. I thank Ministers Welford, Reynolds and McGrady for their willingness to take a variety of questions and the clarity of their answers during the process. The examination of the proposed expenditure for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General revealed a number of interesting and innovative proposals. As mentioned earlier by my colleagues, issues discussed were the drug court trials and the expansion of the program to other areas of the state. This program has been run on the Gold Coast and has proved to be very successful. This is an important initiative on the part of our government. It is part of our commitment to tackle not just crime itself but also the causes of crime.

The drug courts to be established in Cairns and Townsville will fulfil the commitment we made to the people of north Queensland before the last election. The starting date proposed is 1 November this year. A total of \$13.5 million over three years has been allocated across all agencies involved in the expansion. I have had personal dealings with the Gold Coast Drug Council, particularly through Mirikai, a rehabilitation centre in Burleigh Heads, and I know how positively it views this option for its clients.

The Department of Emergency Services is one which throws up enormous challenges. It is an adaptable and resourceful department, and our review of the expenditure showed a number of excellent proposals. In the wake of the tragedy at Childers the department moved quickly to put together a multiagency task force to review our fire laws. Building owners and occupiers have a responsibility to ensure the fire safety of their buildings, including a responsibility to rectify any breaches of fire safety requirements. In fairness, it must be acknowledged that the vast majority of Queensland owners and occupiers are meeting these responsibilities. However, for the small number who are slow to act the QFRS now has a prosecution option.

Some of the issues raised during the review of the Department of Police showed sound proposals and allocations for this very important department. Before the last election the Beattie government committed to the introduction of 16 tactical crime squads with 14 officers in each. I am happy to report that we are well on track to meeting this commitment, with five tactical crime squads already in place and another six on their way this financial year. On the Gold Coast we are already benefiting from this initiative, as are other regions, including Logan, Cairns, Townsville and the Sunshine Coast.

I take this opportunity to thank the committee chair, Mr Geoff Wilson, for his patience and good humour during the hearing process. I thank also the research director, Mr Andrew Timperley, and the committee staff for their hard work and assistance—not forgetting the Hansard staff for a job well done under sometimes difficult circumstances.