



Speech by

## Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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Hansard 1 August 2002

### APPROPRIATION BILLS [ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E]

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (12.28 p.m.): I rise with pleasure to speak on the aspect of this estimates committee relating to the environment. I acknowledge my colleague the member for Keppel, the Hon. Vince Lester, who has asked me to participate on his behalf as he is currently on a government trade delegation with the Police Minister, Tony McGrady, and other members of parliament.

The Fraser Island dingo management strategy has been revealed to be flawed in its approach, with a ludicrous attempt at feral animal management in national parks. There are still a number of incidents occurring on Fraser Island despite the much-lauded Fraser Island dingo management strategy. In the past year the Department of Environment has received reports of five nips, two bites and seven other incidents that show aggressive behaviour of dingoes. Currently there are approximately 160 dingoes on Fraser Island and in the past year nine dingoes have been destroyed for aggressive behaviour. Minister Wells commented in estimates—

We cannot respond ... until the incident occurs, and until we have evidence that there is a likelihood of an incident we cannot respond proactively.

This demonstrates that there is little being done by the government to pre-empt the situation. Greater measures should be taken to prevent further tragedies on the island.

The whole of Queensland remembers the Clinton Gage tragedy. All the warning signs that were ignored by the authorities so many times eventually resulted in the tragic death of an innocent child. Minister Wells informed us that there are warning signs and brochures available on Fraser Island, as well as 15 camp ground rangers and four dingo management rangers, to increase education programs for visitors about dingoes and to warn them of the dangers of dingoes. However, during the estimates hearing the minister commented that people are still confusing dingoes with dogs, which is a sure admission that the education program is failing and the message is not getting through.

Dingoes are dangerous animals and they should be treated as such. The government has a responsibility to ensure that every visitor to a national park is aware of the possible risks posed by dingoes and how to minimise those risks. During the estimates committee hearings, Minister Wells also commented that it was the task of the rangers to tell each tourist about the dangers of dingoes and to monitor the public education programs. Rangers are supposed to make special arrangements for overseas tourists and are charged with checking on them personally. Considering that the visitors to Fraser Island number more than 360,000 a year, it is not feasible to expect the 15 rangers to monitor the vast numbers of tourists who visit the island and even less feasible to expect those rangers to be multilingual.

As an admission of the failure of this campaign, Minister Wells recently advised people that children should remain inside the designated camping areas for their own safety. That is not a solution. The education program and the effectiveness of the Fraser Island dingo management strategy need to be re-evaluated.

I want to address also the lack of funding for the clean-up, research and rejuvenation of Moreton Bay and its surrounding rivers and estuaries. Water quality in Moreton Bay remains a critical issue and one that continues to put at risk the lives of dugongs, loggerhead turtles and bottlenose dolphins. The health of Moreton Bay and its surrounding rivers and estuaries is an important public health matter for everyone who resides in south-east Queensland. The recent detection of pfiesteria algae—dubbed the 'cell from hell' by scientists—is a grave concern for every Queenslander. Despite that, Minister Wells admitted in estimates—

Since the tests were negative, we do not see any point in continuing it.

There is a continual theme of apathy and lack of vigilance on the part of the Beattie government with regard to Queensland's water quality. The government has failed to allocate adequate funds to the clean-up, monitoring and research of the Moreton Bay area.

**Mr WELLS:** I rise to a point of order. The honourable member just said that the tests were negative.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Under the Moreton Bay partnership, the Beattie government allocated \$5 million in total from 1998 to 2001—a pitiful amount on a per year basis. No figure has ever been provided for after 2001. I do not think any more money has been allocated to the partnership. As for the clean-up of the bay—surely a most important part of the program—only a cumulative amount of \$50,000 has been allocated over the past few years. The state cannot expect the Commonwealth or local government to bear the brunt of its responsibility in the bay area.

I will now address the lack of adequate funding for the acquisition and maintenance of national parks. This is certainly a concern in my own area. The national park areas have been extended, and still I cannot find out how much has been budgeted for those areas. The state government invested \$5.50 per hectare in the management of terrestrial protected areas, which is roughly one-third of the amount spent on parks in most other states. For example, New South Wales spends nearly \$25 per hectare. In answer to a question on notice, it was revealed that in the past two years there have been 16 closures of various kinds of national parks, mostly occurring in the Carnarvon National Park. Most of these closures were due to poor maintenance or the inability of the park to cope with increased visitor numbers.