



Speech by

## Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

---

Hansard 1 August 2002

### APPROPRIATION BILLS [ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G]

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (4.04 p.m.): I rise to speak to the report of Estimates Committee G and to comment in particular on the Tourism portfolio. The information provided by the Tourism Minister was most concerning, because it showed that in regard to the \$10 million rescue package the scheme had barely been touched. This was at a time of great distress in the tourism industry. In fact, only five per cent, or \$525,000, of the rescue package that was available was taken up by 11 operators. When I asked the minister about this and the fact that there was a lack of detail available as to why the rescue package had been so poorly used, her attitude was that obviously people in the tourism industry were not doing so badly and they did not really need it.

I asked the minister why she had not looked into the details more. I am concerned that when we know that tourism operators are still doing it tough, particularly in regard to the impact of the indemnity insurance crisis upon the tourism industry, adventure tourism and ecotourism, there has been no real commitment to providing appropriate support to those operators who are carrying the greatest burden of the problem. We find that many people do not want to take on an extra layer of debt, or the rescue package as constructed really was too hard to access and was not appropriate to deal with the real problems in the industry.

Funding for marketing also highlights the real failure of the Beattie Labor government to put its money where its mouth is in regard to one of the key industries here in Queensland. In a question on notice to the minister, the figures showed that there will be a significant decrease in funding allocated to marketing in 2002-03. There has been a \$4 million fall-off in government funding and a \$2 million fall-off in industry support. I believe that that \$2 million of industry support is a key indicator that industry has had cash flow problems and has not been able to provide the matching funding in that regard.

But it is disappointing when the state government has fallen off the pace as far as its real contribution to marketing. When pressed about this issue the minister claimed that there had been no decrease in base funding for marketing and that the drop was the result of a decrease in special purpose funding for marketing. This is true; but again it highlights the minister's lack of interest in tourism in this state. The fact that there are no new special initiatives in the pipeline—or certainly funded ones—illustrates that this minister really has failed to deliver for tourism and its special challenges.

I want to talk about legislation dealing with shonky inbound tourism operators. This is an issue I raised in last year's estimates process, and the minister told the committee that legislation dealing with shonky inbound tourism operators would be in place by June this year. Well, it is August now, and still we have not seen the minister deliver on her promise. What we are seeing is a failure to commit and drive through key initiatives. Again, I brought up this issue at the estimates hearing this year, but all the minister could say was that she will be taking the legislation to cabinet soon. That is not good enough. The minister promised that the legislation would be in place by June. Her time is up again. This is yet another example of how the minister provides only lip-service to the needs of the tourism industry in Queensland.

I want to come back to the issue of public liability insurance for tourism operators. This is the biggest area of inaction by the Minister for Tourism. This is an issue that threatens the entire viability of tourism in Queensland but particularly adventure tourism operators. The minister stated during the estimates process that any solution to skyrocketing insurance premiums for tourism operators is only in the very early stages. What is more concerning is the minister's statement that any solution may be accessible to adventure tourism operators. 'May' is not good enough for a sector of the tourism industry which, by its nature, has been the hardest hit by increases in insurance premiums. We need to make sure that tourism does not lose the fun because of the impact of the indemnity insurance crisis. This is something on which other states have acted, but we have seen a failure in Queensland.

Let us look at Irukandji funding. The Irukandji jellyfish is a subject that strikes at the very core of the tourism industry in Queensland. Once again the minister has played dumb—and very convincingly so. As with the \$10 million rescue package, the minister obviously has very little interest in real funding in regard to the Irukandji jellyfish given that she has taken a lead interest in this. There has been no funding to the state for real research.

Time expired.