



Speech by

**GEOFF WILSON**

**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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Hansard 20 August 2003

**APPROPRIATION BILLS—ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B**

**Mr WILSON** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (2.56 p.m.): It is a delight to address the committee in relation to Estimates Committee B. I want to firstly place on record my appreciation on behalf of the committee to the three ministers involved, Minister McGrady, Minister Welford and Minister Robertson, who was acting for Minister Reynolds who unfortunately was absent on sick leave.

I want to also commend the ministerial staff from each of the three ministers' offices and the departmental staff. There were 10 hours—three hours for each portfolio—of scrutiny that was applied by our committee at a highly detailed level across a whole range of diverse activities within each portfolio. The capacity for each minister to adequately and competently respond to the committee's scrutiny is largely dependent on the work of ministerial and departmental staff and I want to convey my appreciation to them.

I also thank the research staff and the research director, Andrew Timperley, for the work they did in supporting the committee and also all of the Parliamentary Service officers. I finally convey my appreciation to my fellow committee members for the way in which the committee conducted that hearing.

This budget, of which Estimates Committee B deals with three portfolio areas, was handed down on 6 June 2003. It lay on the table for a period of four to five weeks and then there were two weeks of hearings through the estimates committee process. Before moving to the detail of our committee, I want to place on record how important the estimates committee process is within the parliamentary system we have here in Queensland, particularly bearing in mind that we have only one chamber of the parliament.

That estimates committee process was substantially introduced under the Goss administration in the early nineties and it provides unprecedented parliamentary scrutiny by members of government and particularly by members of the opposition of the government's proposed spending for the next financial year. That is to the benefit of the parliament and the benefit of the Queensland community. It obviously also complements the role of the Auditor-General and other accountability mechanisms that are built into the modern state and government instrumentalities that we now have here in Queensland, which is a long way ahead of what was the case in the 1980s and years before.

This budget comprises \$21.5 billion in expected income and expenditure. This expenditure of \$21.5 billion is across 19 departments and many agencies. I want to contrast the size of the Queensland budget with that of the federal budget, whose income provides \$179 billion for the 2003-04 financial year. The Queensland budget's income is about 11.7 per cent of the federal budget income, just to get a sense of proportion measured against the national budget. Fifty per cent of Queensland's budgeted expenditure is on wages and salaries. In this coming financial year, almost 50 per cent of expenditure will go on education and health. That gives some sense of setting in which to assess the level of expenditure available in the Queensland economy under the Queensland budget.

A number of key areas have been addressed in the various portfolios. The appointment of the state coroner is an important initiative of this Beattie government. There has been considerable progress made in the trials of drug courts in south-east Queensland and north Queensland. Significantly, in the emergency services area we have seen the introduction of the much-appreciated

community ambulance system, which provides universal cover for all Queenslanders and replaces the voluntary subscription scheme that was showing clearly that it was not adequate for the modern needs of Queensland. I commend the report of Estimates Committee B to the consideration of the parliament.