



Speech by

HOWARD HOBBS

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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APPROPRIATION BILLS—ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (6.01 p.m.): I am pleased to speak today to the report of Estimates Committee G. There are a number of issues I would like to canvass in this debate, particularly in relation to rural communities. I am certainly disappointed that rural communities are not getting recognition of the important role they play throughout Queensland. It is probably more of a funding issue. I am sure that the minister is sympathetic to the needs of the people out there, but it seems as though the whole-of-government approach is not working in relation to a lot of rural communities. If more funding were available we would get far better results in those communities in relation to quality of life, the value adding process and improving services.

Another issue is that no more QGAPs are coming into the system. The minister has stated that in the foreseeable future there will be some other government initiatives focusing on service delivery through the Access Queensland smart service. I am not sure how good that will be. I think the issue is that we have to start moving. We either go that way or we get some more QGAPs officers. Probably more funding has to be obtained for that in the meantime. I asked about QGAPs last year. One Aboriginal community was coming on line then, and that is really all that has happened. We have not achieved a great deal in relation to service delivery for those rural communities. I think more needs to be done in that area.

During the estimates hearing I asked the minister about the ADP program. I did say that I would talk to Minister Truss in relation to whether funding was still available under the ADP program. The minister has written me a letter—I believe that he is writing to the minister independently; if he has not done so already I will give the minister a copy of my letter—which states—

I remain committed to assisting the WDSG—

that is, the Western Downs Solutions Group—

in driving change for long-term community sustainability in the Western Downs region under the ADP program. I have considered the draft proposal forwarded to the Commonwealth by the WDSG for consideration under the ADP for 'phase one' funding of planning and community consultation activities. I am prepared to encourage its further development subject to support and matching funding from the Queensland Government.

While there are funds available under the ADP for the WDSG project, no specific funding allocation has yet been agreed.

The money is there. If we can get a bit of a kick-start from the government I am sure we can make some real miles in the western downs region.

Earlier the Minister for Racing made some comments. It is really quite amazing: the minister really hasn't got it. She thinks we haven't got it, but she hasn't got it at all. I have never seen a more atrocious handling of a portfolio. Basically, she has single-handedly gone out and destroyed an industry. Of course we welcome the \$10 million funding that is being provided now, but that is at the expense of 100-odd country clubs that have been closed down. Sure, there has been some increased funding coming in from UNiTAB. By the same token, I understand that that \$10 million is on the never-never. It is coming in over a period of time. It will not come in in one hit. There is a bit of smoke and mirrors about this particular announcement that is being made, and we will have to go through this whole process again.

I do not doubt that the returns from UNiTAB will in fact increase over time, but we have not fixed properly the privatisation of the TAB. Until that is really fixed it will happen again and more country clubs

will go to the wire. There is no mechanism in this announcement to actually ensure that the country clubs will continue. We cannot have one without the other. We have to look after country racing, provincial racing and metropolitan racing. One will not work without the others. It is very important that we look at those aspects.