



Speech by

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APPROPRIATION BILLS—ESTIMATES COMMITTEE F

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommamey—ALP) (4.28 p.m.): The Legislative Assembly appointed Estimates Committee F to examine and report on the proposed expenditure set out in the Appropriation Bill 2003 for the organisational units within the portfolio areas of the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy, the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing and Minister for Families, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services and Minister for Seniors. The committee conducted a public hearing on Wednesday 23 July to take evidence from these ministers and their respective officers.

My committee compromised the Hon. Kevin Lingard MP, the member for Beaudesert and deputy chair; Mrs Linda Lavarch MP, the member for Kurwongbah; Mrs Diane Reilly MP, the member for Mudgeeraba; Mr Steven Rodgers MP, the member for Burdekin; Mr Ray Hopper MP, the member for Darling Downs; and Dr David Watson MP, the member for Moggill. Visitors to the committee included the Hon. Vaughan Johnson, the member for Gregory, and the Hon. Vince Lester, the member for Keppel. I take this opportunity to thank all of those honourable members for their assistance, cooperation and contribution as members of Estimates Committee F. It is also appropriate for me to mention the hard work and commitment of Ms Meg Hoban, research director, and Ms Narelle Robinson, executive assistant, in the lead-up to and during the hearing.

For the purposes of examining the proposed expenditure for the organisational units allocated to it, the committee considered information obtained at the public hearing in conjunction with budget papers and the Ministerial Portfolio Statements, minister's written responses to the committee's questions on notice prior to the public hearing and minister's written responses to questions taken on notice at the public hearing. During its inquiry the committee examined a wide range of issues, and I will speak about some of these issues in this debate.

The Innovation and Information Economy portfolio is administered as part of the Department of Innovation and Information Economy, Sport and Recreation Queensland and includes CITEC. The department's total appropriation is \$448.826 million. Under this portfolio, emerging technologies, biotechnology, information technology and telecommunications are all being positioned to bring the benefits for all of us—from big industry to household consumers. The minister is working hard to make sure that the energy industry moves forward and provides low-cost, reliable electricity to consumers. Part of the \$100 million Smart State budget strategy included an extra \$50 million to expand the successful Smart State Research Facilities Fund and the minister has funded 12 projects worth just over \$96 million.

The Public Works and Housing portfolio comprises the Department of Public Works and the Department of Housing and statutory authorities that report to the minister through these departments. The total appropriation provided to these departments in the Appropriation Bill 2003 is \$489.735 million. This has been a very big year for the Department of Public Works with the icon project being the completion of the Suncorp Stadium. The Department of Public Works is also involved in providing furniture and fittings to schools and, as we all know, Goprint. The minister congratulated a number of people within the department who are very committed and are the recipients of a number of awards. I congratulate the minister on the large number of apprentices—over 1,000—trained by his department. This is despite the lack of federal government funding for the construction of new houses. Senator Vanstone submits that rental assistance is enough. However, it does not work when there is not any accommodation available.

The purpose of the Department of Families is to strengthen and protect the wellbeing of Queenslanders, particularly those who are vulnerable and most in need. The total appropriation for the Department of Families in 2003-04 is \$491.771 million and issues considered by the committee included the carers recognition policy and assistance to senior carers, commercial accommodation facilities for children and young people, prevention and early intervention trials and the Reconnect workers' implementation of Project Axis recommendations, strategic directions and priorities for child protection.

Disability Services Queensland provides a wide range of programs and services for people with a disability, their families and carers in the community. The total appropriation for Disability Services in Queensland was \$289.938 million and it administers the Resident Support Program. Just over the last two years this government has invested almost half a billion dollars for our human services. This money is committed to rebuilding our social capital, it is money committed to improving the lives of some of our most vulnerable and those least able to speak on their own behalf. The record budget for Disability Services Queensland includes \$290.5 million over four years for Queenslanders with a disability and their families. The Beattie government has already started working with indigenous communities to tackle alcohol abuse and violence. It has taken on the challenge to reform the community governance legislation. I commend the report to the House.

Time expired.