



Speech by

Hon. K. LINGARD

MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT

Hansard 20 August 2003

APPROPRIATION BILLS—ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (2.30 p.m.): I thank the committee, because I was an invited member. I was not part of the original committee, but because the opposition is having trouble with many of its portfolios I was allowed the courtesy of a few minutes. I thank the minister and the committee for that. There is only one issue I wish to address, and that is still the issue of Lang Park or Suncorp Stadium. If we believe in our committee system and in scrutiny by both the Auditor-General and the committee system, it is absolutely ridiculous to think that we have been unable to scrutinise what has happened at Lang Park, or Suncorp Stadium.

I have mentioned this issue at times, and I have been on the Public Works Committee for a long time. I have been referred to the privileges committee because of the things that I have said, but it is still ridiculous to think that a Public Works Committee will not allow and has not allowed an investigation into the spending of money at Suncorp Stadium, nor has this minister referred to either the Public Works Committee or the Public Accounts Committee the issue of Suncorp Stadium. It will go down as one of the things that the public will see as completely ridiculous, because we have got to the stage now where the government has received a lot of kudos about Suncorp Stadium. That is fair enough; it is a magnificent stadium. I attended on the first night and you would not get a better rectangular stadium. However, there is still the fact that the opposition, the government and the public have not been able to criticise and scrutinise what has happened at Suncorp Stadium, and that is absolutely ridiculous.

The government continually talks about its special levy to raise \$235 million. It continually talks about the fact that this year it is behind in its money raising. The minister continually says that maybe the major facilities levy, which was set up to repay the money within 20 years time, may have to be increased. Yet the revenue taken from poker machines has risen from \$257.2 million five years ago to \$400 million now, and still the government says that maybe there is not enough money to repay the \$235 million. Then in another breath the government says that maybe it needs to increase this levy and have money left over at the end of the 20 years so that it can spend money on other facilities.

It is ridiculous to think that even in an estimates committee the minister can turn around on some subjects and say, 'No, I will not answer that. That is part of Ogden,' the company that is managing the whole thing. Yet still we get that. We have continually heard about the grass. We have continually heard different answers in terms of the grass issue, but anyone who watched the Bledisloe Cup on the weekend which was played in New Zealand—it was played at a magnificent stadium—would know that there was a reference to the turf and underlay used at that stadium. That is completely different turf. It is no use saying that there is different sunlight in New Zealand and that as a result some parts of the ground do not get any sun. If we as a community and we as a public—especially a public that has spent \$235 million on this stadium, and in the end \$280 million obviously—cannot criticise the grass used and cannot ask and investigate whether there might have been a better system, then I think that clearly there is something wrong.

One of my criticisms of Suncorp Stadium is that, as with the Cultural Centre, there are too many inlets where people can come in which therefore means that there needs to be too many personnel when conducting a function. That is all right during an event such as a State of Origin when there are 52,000 people attending, but when there is a smaller activity the same number of staff is still required. In the case of the Cultural Centre, that has meant that it has not maintained some of the shows. I still worry that the same will happen with Suncorp Stadium. However, I have received assurances that the

top part of Suncorp Stadium can be closed off and only the bottom section used for smaller functions. That, to me, is good.

The other worry I have relates to the lease arrangements, because when there is a single entity like Rugby League at a place like Suncorp it is depending on only one group. If the Broncos do not go well and if the public does not come to see them, then the Broncos will not be able to maintain the massive cost of the lease. We have seen that happen at the Brisbane Cricket Ground, where the lease is shared by the Cricketers Club and Aussie Rules.

Time expired.