



Speech by
Mike Horan

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

Hansard Thursday, 19 August 2004

APPROPRIATION BILLS; ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (3.07 p.m.): At the outset I would like to thank the chairman, Mr Tim Mulherin, for the courtesies that he extended to us and the efficient way he operated the estimates hearing. I would also like to thank the secretariat—Ms Renee Easten and Ms Carolyn Heffernan. At the conclusion of the estimates hearing, I gave credit to the department for its efforts in the citrus canker episode. From all the reports I was receiving, departmental officers did a good job, and let us hope their efforts continue to be successful.

I presented a dissenting report to this estimates hearing because I believe there are a number of issues that were not satisfactorily answered. That is what the estimates process is for: for us to be able to scrutinise some of the payments made during the year or some of the budgeted amounts and the spin that goes with those amounts in the production of the budget.

The first part of my explanation about inconsistent answers was the failure of the minister to properly explain why more than \$1.2 million of FarmBis funding was spent training 350 divers in the Torres Strait. Under the QRAA guidelines—QRAA is the agent which provides the money—funding for FarmBis cannot be used for operational training of people and it cannot be used to train people to comply with particular guidelines, for example, workplace health and safety. So money cannot be used to train a jackaroo to ride a horse. It cannot be used to train someone to drive a tractor, but it can be used for farm business management. It is for farm business management and land management. That is why it is called FarmBis. We see that this amount of \$1.2 million has been given to train 350 divers in the Torres Strait, and the minister himself said that it was for health and safety reasons.

In questioning on this whole process, we demonstrated that about 25 per cent of FarmBis funding was spent in three shires in far-north Queensland, pretty well all in the Cook electorate. We showed how that was two and a half times the amount that had been paid out in FarmBis to 20 shires in western Queensland. What we are trying to do in estimates is to make sure that when funds are available like this—which was Commonwealth funds and an allocation from the state government—it is paid out fairly and squarely around the state. It looks very suspicious to us that all this money in FarmBis went to these three shires in the electorate of Cook just prior to the election to help the new Labor member who was hoping to take the place of the former minister.

Mr Palaszczuk: I rise to a point of order. That is totally untrue and offensive, and I ask that that remark be withdrawn.

Mr HORAN: If the minister finds that offensive, I will withdraw that remark.

Mr Palaszczuk: I rise to a point of order.

Mr HORAN: I withdrew it.

Mr Palaszczuk: I rise to a point of order.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Ms Jarratt): What is your point of order?

Mr Palaszczuk: My point of order is this: I found the remark untrue and offensive, and I have asked the honourable member to withdraw it.

Mr HORAN: I have withdrawn it.

Mr Palaszczuk: He only withdrew it. He did not withdraw the fact that it is untrue.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: The remark has been withdrawn in its entirety.

Mr HORAN: It has been withdrawn.

As I said, 25 per cent of FarmBis funding went into those three shires in the Cook electorate, and I have shown how, under the rules of QRAA, they could not have been applied. We do not mind the funds going to those particular shires for genuine reasons, but we see a problem when 25 per cent goes into one small area of the state and other areas of the state miss out. It is just not fair.

There was also the issue of the National Livestock Identification System to which some \$690,000 has been allocated. Through the answers we received in the estimates, there is the possibility of another \$520,000 that has been provided being new money, but that is all the new money that there possibly is. Yet the announcement in the budget and the press announcements by the minister were that there was \$4.45 million for the NLIS introduction in Queensland. That is simply not true. The bulk of that money is for what they have always been doing—brands identification and registration, property identification and so forth. We were able to expose that particular spin.

We also sought some clarification of decisions on revocation of drought declarations. The minister refused to provide any minutes from the drought committees. We are very concerned about the decisions that are being made. The minister has always said in the statements on revocation that the decision has been made by the local drought committee. We want to know that everybody from the drought committee has been involved and that it has been a genuine decision by that drought committee, not by one or two people or because of pressure from the department to bring about that revocation.

Time expired.