



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL (ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A)

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (12.49 pm): Once again it is my pleasure to rise to speak on report No. 2 of Estimates Committee A. I want to address some of the comments of the member for Ipswich. I find it disappointing that she did not acknowledge that we had a fairly good natured tete-a-tete—exchange—with the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. I would like to thank the minister now that I have moved on to another shadow ministry—that is, employment, training and racing. I would like to thank the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing even though we have—

Mrs Reilly interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: I do have the Racing portfolio still. I want to thank him for the way that he has briefed me and had his staff brief me and for the way that he has always conducted himself in our dealings with each other. I appreciate that and look forward to hopefully returning to the portfolio at some later stage.

I want to raise my concern, though, in relation to the time allocated to the portfolio for Public Works, Housing and Racing to allow for adequate and proper scrutiny. The time allocated in the past for this portfolio was longer. The steady decline in time over the last few years is a matter of concern, and I noted this in my statement of reservations. In 2000, three hours and 45 minutes were allocated. In 2001, two hours and 34 minutes were allocated. In 2002, three hours and 11 minutes were allocated. Yet this year only two and a quarter hours were allocated. It seems that adequate time was provided for in the earlier years of this Labor government, but as its numbers and budgetary outcomes have become increasingly worse so has the time allowed to scrutinise those numbers. This is an issue pointed out more specifically when government members elected to finish their 'examination' early. I would have asked more questions had the opportunity been given to me.

I want to address the issue of termites that was raised by me at the estimates hearing. In my arduous to uncover whether this government using the BSA as its agent is adequately monitoring the blight of termites in housing, I asked a question about a company called Termimesh. Unfortunately, in my questions I besmirched the good name of a reputable company and have since had clarified to me by some senior executives—Clive Cumming and Paul Hutchinson—that the assertions that were made to me were made by an individual with a vested interest. This individual has had a Federal Court injunction issued against him that he should not make such representations but he gets around that injunction by going to members of parliament and using parliamentary privilege.

I want to place on the record my apologies to Termimesh and acknowledge its record of wanting to fix the problems with its product, which I understand relate to less than 0.1 per cent of all of its customers. It has a contingency fund. It often fixes problems that have nothing to do with it but, for the sake of its name, it is happy to do so. It is an important employer in Queensland. But I do say that it is important that this government, through the BSA, continues to monitor the issue. I understand that there are products that are used that are of dubious quality. If incidences arise, as I understand and I expect they may in the future, I would like it placed on the record that I am warning that there should be better assessment by the

BSA of products that are potentially being used so that the householders of Queensland are adequately protected.

There was a confirmation from the minister that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing remains an area where the government has not been able to address money wastage and rent remains uncollected. The confirmation from the minister in the estimates hearing was confirmed again since estimates in the Auditor-General's report No. 3 for 2006 outlining the audits of Aboriginal shire councils and Torres Strait Islander councils. The loans and debts, including housing rental, owed by Aboriginal shire councils amount to \$321,174. The housing rental write-offs of Aboriginal shire councils amount to \$240,967. The loans and debts, including housing rental, owed by Torres Strait Islander councils amount to \$112,651. The housing rental write-offs of Torres Strait Islander councils amount to \$124,055.

The minister admitted that the government does not have ATSI housing right. It has had eight years to get it right, and all this Labor government can do is confirm in light of the Auditor-General's findings that it is still getting it wrong. Mismanagement was a theme that was present in the Public Works portfolio as well. Despite the release of the state budget only weeks before, the minister announced around \$10 million for the portfolio which was not announced in the budget. There was some \$4½ million for Goprint given that Goprint had had no capital expenditure granted to it in two budgets and another \$5 million for water efficiency measures for public housing in reaction to the water crisis that the years of inaction by the Beattie government has created. We think this indicates poor planning, mismanagement or even a diversionary tactic—having an announcement held back to act as a smokescreen for the failings of the Beattie government in this portfolio.

Time expired.