



Speech by

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

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (4.44 pm): It was again a privilege to be able to take part in Estimates Committee G. At the outset I would like to thank our chair, Julie Attwood, the member for Mount Ommaney, and the other members of that committee for the meetings that we had and the process. Also at the outset I want to thank the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries and the director-general and staff for the courtesies extended and also for their involvement in the process.

It is quite concerning that I had to make a dissenting report. Any reading of this dissenting report will show the number of failures that we were able to quite clearly demonstrate. With a department as important as DPI&F which is responsible for an \$11 billion industry, one would like to see consistent results coming from that department. Sadly, that department has had a succession of some four different ministers throughout the last 12 months, so we can understand the dislocation and disruption that has occurred in that department. It is also a department that has been at the receiving end of an absolute hammering from the Beattie government ever since it has been in power throughout the last eight or so years. The department has had consistent cuts to its budget and consistent cuts to its staff, and we were able to demonstrate that throughout this estimates hearing.

There are a couple of issues that I want to highlight. With regard to the statements that the minister had made about a recruitment drive prior to the estimates, we were able to show that there was actually a cutting of staff. Where the government had loudly said that there were going to be 100 new staff in DPI, it turns out that at the same time there were 121 voluntary early retirements. So the cutting continues with about 21 losses, and this will bring to around 300 the number of staff who have left the DPI under voluntary early retirement arrangements in the period of the Beattie government. No wonder the department is having trouble meeting its targets and its achievements!

There has also been cutting of staff from the fire ant eradication program despite eight new infestations being discovered. There is the failure of the drought recovery loan scheme to provide far-reaching and meaningful assistance during the worst drought in living memory with only 20 and 10 new applicants respectively assisted in the 2005-06 year; the failure of myriad rural loan schemes, such as the sugar farm consolidation scheme and the coral reef fin fish temporary assistance scheme, with only a very small number of people taking these up; and the failure of the minister to explain again the continual cutting of the budget. We were able to demonstrate that the amount of contribution by the state government to the DPI's budget—because there are other components from other areas—this year is less than the contribution in 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05.

We also discussed the Hendra virus at Peachester. An independent report has just come out and 30 days has been provided for interested people to look at and respond to that. I was very concerned about some of the processes from day one to day 10 in that period of time. I was also extremely concerned about the lack of support to the young vet in the field and particularly the failure of systems to provide advice through the two telephone hotlines in particular and other lines. There was no information from the minister about the effect of the Traveston Crossing Dam on primary producers, bearing in mind that about 10 per

cent of Queensland's vital dairy production is produced in that part of the Mary Valley. We were able to demonstrate that the department failed to meet its target for international and domestic trade. We were able to show that it failed to meet its target for new market opportunities. It decided to stop reporting on measures such as trade targets because of its failures. The forestry department in a time of record economic growth failed by 47 per cent to meet its target of \$46 million. It achieved only some \$24 million. We also, of course, once again could not get an answer on the fishing zones in Moreton Bay and what the government plans to do after the election with regard to restricting recreational anglers.

How refreshing it is to have heard part of our policy this week which I announced in parliament. We are going to put in 50 new stock inspectors and extension officers, a new culture of service within the DPI, a biofuels unit and a 20 per cent increase in research and development. Under the coalition, there will be a revitalised DPI. We will give hope, optimism and enthusiasm to the staff. At the same time we will give service to the farmers, the foresters and the fishers of Queensland. What a refreshing change that will be.

Time expired.