



Speech by

Paul Hoolihan

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (4.06 pm): It gives me great pride to stand today and speak in support of the report of Estimates Committee F. I do have some comments to make about certain of the approaches that were taken during the investigation of this committee. At the outset I would like to thank the various ministers and all of their staff for their assistance and their wide outline in relation to questions asked. I would also like to thank parliamentary and ministerial staff. Our research directors, Ali de Jersey and Stephen Finnimore, were the two prime movers, but the other members and support staff worked admirably and it made the work of our committee exceedingly easy.

This is the third estimates committee on which I have sat, and the minutiae which is raised by opposition members never ceases to amaze me. It is not really using the power of estimates in relation to investigation of expenditure. It is a sad indictment that, with three departments with a total output summary of \$955 million, the member for Caloundra can stand up in this House and make all sorts of complaints about the fact that he did not have his questions in on time. Nothing turned on that and the minister, in actual fact, indicated that she was prepared to answer any questions and to discuss those aspects.

The other thing that really concerned me was the opening gambit by the member for Caloundra and his complete insistence on demanding an outline of how the minister appoints a judicial officer. If anyone looks at the way the estimates committees are structured and the basis for them, they will see that they represent a powerful way of really looking at the spending of the various government departments. It is sad that opposition members seem to have overlooked that and want to try to embarrass ministers rather than look at the actual amount of expenditure.

I enjoyed my time on this committee because of the ministers we had to question, and I have great pleasure in supporting the recommendation as to the proposed expenditure. Estimates are a powerful way for members of parliament to ask questions of the relevant ministers pertaining to their portfolios so that they can outline for their own constituents just how their tax dollars are spent. If people are prepared to walk into an estimates committee and not ask any questions in relation to the spending, then I think it is a complete and utter waste of time. I think it is a great sadness that when we see the statements of reservation the only real statement of reservation that mentions any amount is from the member for Maroochydore. If we look at the statements by the member for Caloundra and the member for Warrego, I would suggest that the general reservations set out by both of them seem to have been written by the same person because the dot points use exactly the same English expression.

All in all, this has been a great opportunity to outline the spending of the Beattie government in relation to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice; the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors; and the Minister for Small Business, Information Technology Policy and Multicultural Affairs. I support the recommendation.