



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

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

Ms CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (3.26 pm): I am pleased to rise to speak in the debate on the report of Estimates Committee B. A committee chaired by the member for Hervey Bay is always one that works well and is efficiently managed. I congratulate the member for his efforts and the rest of the committee for their good work. The parliamentary staff always do a great job. I thank them for their tremendous efforts to get Estimates Committee B organised and through the day.

Estimates Committee B covered three portfolios which I have a personal interest in and which are key portfolios that I know are important to the residents of the Broadwater electorate. The ministers and staff of the Health, Child Safety and Police and Corrective Services portfolios provided the committee with information on funding allocations, initiatives and government developments in crucial areas. While funding allocations are of great interest to all, the estimates process is an important opportunity to hear from the ministers how the departments are responding to certain issues and identified concerns.

Health is a critical issue that I know a lot of people are concerned about. The Minister for Health presented the state government's operational budget of \$6.649 billion. That is a 24 per cent increase in the budget. The Minister for Health also talked about the \$48.6 million that has been allocated to emergency departments around the state and the \$39.8 million that has been allocated to intensive care units to relieve pressures of demand. Indeed, the minister spoke of increased funding to mental health services, cardiac services and renal services. I know that for many members in the House that would have been of great interest.

I will direct some comments to the questioning from the shadow minister for health, the now Leader of the Liberal Party. He has been in the place a whole five minutes and has been elevated to Leader of the Liberal Party. Questioning by the Leader of the Liberal Party at estimates gave us a snapshot of what we can expect from the Leader of the Liberal Party. He is a doctor who is constantly questioning the minister about individual patient particulars which I find quite appalling. One of the very first questions from the Leader of the Liberal Party was one such question. It was deemed to be out of order. He knows that the minister does not make clinical decisions, yet he grasps at straws to gain media attention by attacking the hardworking doctors and staff in our excellent public health system.

I believe that if health issues were so important to the Leader of the Liberal Party he would have been listening to the minister's answers to the government and opposition questions let alone his own questions. Instead, he spent the morning when the Minister for Health was being questioned chasing the media and cranking up his staff to put out more misleading press releases. He was getting up and answering his phone, leaving and not listening to the questions that other members were asking. We gave him the courtesy of listening to his questions. He could have at least had the decency of staying in the hearing room.

If the Leader of the Liberal Party had done so, he would have heard the minister informing the committee of the government's Health Action Plan to recruit an extra 300 doctors, 500 nurses and 400 allied health professionals by December of this year, about the government's recruitment and retention

strategy to attract and retain staff, the changes that have been made to the Medical Board of Queensland and initiatives to improve patient flow and reduce the access block in our hospitals that he just referred to in his waffle of a speech. He would have heard about the improvements made to waiting times for specialist outpatients and also the government's \$155 million over four years to address chronic disease prevention and management in Queensland. But, no, the Leader of the Liberal Party would have heard none of that because his interests were only in political point-scoring and talking with the media about personal matters that he knows that the minister has no ability to intervene into.

Throughout the day we also heard contributions from the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and the Minister for Child Safety, both of which were of great interest to me. I was delighted to hear the child safety minister inform the committee about the \$503 million operational budget. The minister spoke very proudly of the government's commitment to child safety and the 28 per cent increase in the Child Safety budget. Of course, the minister became the child safety minister following concerns about the department's procedures, staff capabilities and case workloads, and I was very pleased to hear the minister talk in particular about the department's investment in its staff and making its workplaces much safer. From the police and corrective services minister we heard a great deal about what the department is doing. I commend the Estimates Committee B report to the House.