



Speech by

**Ray Hopper**

**MEMBER FOR DARLING DOWNS**

Hansard Thursday, 10 August 2006

---

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

**Mr HOPPER** (Darling Downs—NPA) (5.12 pm): Before speaking to this estimates committee report I inform the House that I have been appointed the shadow minister for DNR and am looking forward to working with the minister. When we get into the nitty-gritty of this debate we see that there has been a lot of focus on water in south-east Queensland and what needs to be done to address the crisis the Beattie Labor government has created in this fast-growing region. I say that the crisis has been created by the Beattie Labor government because it has done nothing with a capital N. It has built a footbridge and a football stadium. That is what Queensland has seen. There are 1,500 people a week coming in from over the border and what infrastructure has been put in place? Absolutely nothing. We have built every bit of infrastructure in Queensland: the Burdekin, the Bowen Basin, the Gateway Bridge, the Gold Coast freeway. We put all that in place—absolutely everything. We are the build-it people of this parliament and it is as simple as that.

This Beattie government has built nothing and is now reaping the fruits of what has occurred. As for the current drought, I have heard a lot of people talk about climate change. If members read the *Courier-Mail* on Saturday they would have seen that the Weather Bureau has said that it has no definite evidence of climate change. We heard our leader this morning talking about the Burdekin River not flowing for 30 years. That was a drought; that was a stage they were going through. We are going through a drought at present. The problem is that there has been no infrastructure put in place. We were calling for a waste water pipeline to be put in place years ago. We had drafted a plan to do that. What has this government done? Absolutely nothing! This has snuck up on the government. It has caught out the members opposite and they have been left wanting.

We have a government that has made a heap of promises in a glossy brochure saying, 'This is what we're going to do. We'll go to the polls on water and we'll say that the opposition does not support it'—all because of a measly little motion which was moved in the House last night. It is an absolute farce. Like the shadow minister for water, I have to ask: what has been put in place? There is not a dozer, not a bit of cement, not one piece of infrastructure, not one bit of money spent towards this. What we have is promises, promises, promises; we will, we will, we will.

I will now touch on vegetation management and in particular the financial assistance package that the government, under this minister, claimed would assist landholders whose livelihoods have been affected by vegetation management laws. For a start, let us look at the DNR staff in our rural towns—the people over the counter. The staff of the department are wonderful people, but they have been faced with irate farmers who have to pay a charge to get a property management map. The process they have to go through involves cost, cost and more cost. The people who work for the department are on the end of the whip, on the end of the stick. Morale in the department has totally gone down and that has to be addressed. They are good people who are doing what they can but their hands are tied by ludicrous laws put in place by this minister.

Going into the last state election Labor claimed it would provide a \$150 million vegetation management assistance package of which \$130 million would be available to landholders either through enterprise assistance grants or exit assistance grants. So far \$19 million of the \$130 million package—about 15 per cent—has actually been provided to landholders affected by these laws. Here again we have exactly what I was talking about before: promises, promises, promises; looks good, but the 'can do' is not being done.

There is nothing to back up the legislation that passes through this House. The real fruits of legislation do not get put in place. This is a government that is just promises, promises, promises, glossy brochures and paperwork. It is as simple as that. There is only about six months to go before these applications close. It is becoming increasingly apparent that almost \$100 million of this package will disappear into the black hole of Treasury. The minister knew that. The minister knows that if he does not give this money out it will go back into the government's coffers and not into farmers' pockets—desperate people who need this compensation. That is typical of this Labor government which is more interested in being seen to be doing something than actually doing something to fix the problem it has created.