



Speech by

## Robert Messenger

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard Thursday, 10 August 2006

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### APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL (ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E)

**Mr MESSENGER** (Burnett—NPA) (3.03 pm): I would like to thank my estimates committee colleagues for their fellowship and professionalism—the members for Cunningham, Fitzroy, Nicklin, Noosa and Whitsunday. The committee was competently chaired by the member for Indooroopilly, Mr Ronan Lee, who displayed good humour and good grace throughout all of the estimates process. His leadership allowed the process to run smoothly. I would also like to thank the parliamentary staff, Mr Stephen Finnimore, as well as the ministerial and departmental staff of the education and arts minister, and the minister and departmental staff—

**Mr Reeves** interjected.

**Mr MESSENGER:** You had better listen to it; you do not often get it.

**Mr Reeves** interjected.

**Mr MESSENGER:** Do not worry, it is coming. I also thank the departmental staff of the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women. Particular mention and thanks must also go to the hardworking staff of the Leader of the Opposition.

While personal relationships during the hearings were good, I do have serious concerns and worries about the estimates process. I table those formal reservations.

*Tabled paper:* Mr Messenger's Statement of Reservation—Environment.

Because of a decision by this Premier and his Labor government, this is the first year that politicians have been able to lie to parliament and not face the prospect of a jail term. That decision by this Premier has fundamentally undermined and weakened this process.

The performance of the environment minister during the limited time I had to question her was a shocker. Because of time constraints caused by a committee vote which was won by the opposition, the minister only had to answer two environmental questions from the opposition and most of her energy was focused on personal attacks of me. She failed to show any concern, for example, over the Traveston Dam, starving cassowaries or the obstruction by the EPA of the Bundaberg Turtle Interpretive Centre.

We asked that the minister table documentation that was provided to other government agencies on the Traveston Dam. I have a copy of that here. Unusually, the minister has not signed this briefing note that she gave to the committee. She has not been doing her homework because she has not signed off on it. I will read it into the *Hansard*. It states—

The key issues that she was supposed to look at were the potential environmental issues, the reduction of environmental flows within the Great Sandy Straits, Hervey Bay and estuarine areas of the Mary River. This includes the Great Sandy Marine Park, high environmental value areas, the EPP water in the Great Sandy Straits, Ramsar areas, significant wetlands, state and coastal management plan, and fish habitat areas.

These are all warning bells that the minister should be listening to, because the establishment by the Beattie government of that absolute environmental and social disaster on the Mary River will have

dramatic effects throughout the Great Sandy Straits, recreational fishing and commercial fishing areas, not to mention the Mary River turtle and the Mary River cod hatcheries. I will also table an article from *Nature* which shows how endangered the lungfish are and how stupid this decision is by the Beattie government to put a dam right at Traveston crossing. It is an absolute travesty for Traveston.

*Tabled paper:* Document titled 'Dam project threatens living fossil'.

The other issue that I would like to raise in the brief time that I have available is the plight of the southern cassowary in far-north Queensland following Cyclone Larry. What I will do is table a letter from the Garners Beach Cassowary Action Group, which has just written to me alerting this House and Queenslanders to the fact that cassowaries are starving on Mission Beach and around Innisfail, and this government is not doing a thing about it. It is letting them die. It is stopping their feeding program. So we have an iconic species—

*Tabled paper:* Letter dated 9 August 2006 from Garners Beach Cassowary Action Group to Mr Messenger regarding the plight of the southern cassowary in far-north Queensland following Cyclone Larry.

**Mr Lee:** What is their feeding program?

**Mr MESSENGER:** I will tell you about the feeding program because I went for a walk with the Garners Beach Cassowary Action Group and saw firsthand just what was happening. Cassowaries are eviscerating animals. They are endangering the lives of children and adults who have, for example, apples or fruit on their person.

**Mr Finn** interjected.

**Mr MESSENGER:** What we must do is listen to the wisdom of the local community and the environmental experts. We need significantly more crisis feeding stations for cassowaries. They need to be set up in the Mission Beach and Innisfail regions as well as the hinterland and Atherton Tableland areas to prevent further unnecessary deaths of the endangered species.

Time expired.