



Speech by

Hon. Andrew Fraser

MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Hansard Wednesday, 8 August 2007

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (7.50 pm): Can I begin my comments in this estimates debate by acknowledging the work of the chair of Estimates Committee E, the member for Inala, and the other government members on the committee who had the unique displeasure, in my view, of witnessing one of the more disgraceful performances by a member of the opposition in an estimates committee hearing.

This estimates committee commenced on entirely the wrong foot and proceeded to get worse from that point forward. I heard at the hearing the trite nonsense from members of the opposition and I saw in the report of the estimates committee the trite nonsense from members of the opposition as they regurgitated the same points about the estimates committee process.

The great tragedy in the estimates committee process that related to my portfolio was the entire lack of effort and application to task by the shadow minister. He undertook no considered examination of the budget or the MPS before him and turned up only to be obnoxious, to make bombastic points and to try to hijack the entire course and conduct of the estimates committee hearing. I pay tribute to the chairmanship of the member for Inala and the efforts of the other government members on the committee.

The member for Warrego, the shadow minister, made remarks about how he felt so let down by the estimates committee process. I think the people of Queensland would feel let down. If we look through each of the reports from the estimates committee the shortest report of all is from the member for Warrego. It is the one most lacking in detail, the one most lacking in insight, the one that is merely a one-page effort, a one-page effort remarkable for its lethargy—clearly this is a shadow minister who is operating on autopilot—remarkable for its brevity, remarkable for its laziness that then has six dot points at the end of that one page which contribute to his notion of what he believes were the shortcomings of the process.

I think that there is one group of people who are entitled to feel let down by the estimates committee process and it is not the opposition; it is the people of Queensland. This is the best resourced opposition in the country. It is also, in my view, the laziest and the most ineffective opposition in the country. For the members of the opposition to come into the estimates committee process and regurgitate the same trite remarks about what they consider to be the shortcomings of the process but then demonstrate no application to task whatsoever is a stunning commentary on their ineffectiveness as an opposition and it is why they ultimately are totally unfit to serve on this side of the House.

I am proud to be administering a portfolio budget of more than \$840 million this financial year. The department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation will again be providing significant grant funding to local communities around the state. We will provide this funding not only to local governments—and we continue to provide a level of support to local governments that is well above the batting average—but also to community groups, to individual sporting organisations and to other entities around the state as we build the sort of infrastructure and the sort of community facilities that are required to keep a growth state like Queensland in good order.

I want to touch in particular on a couple of initiatives in the budget which really put the lie to the notion that the opposition is interested in providing the infrastructure and facilities that they say they are. Reference was made in the estimates committee hearing to the provision of infrastructure in Indigenous communities in particular. In that regard, there were some rather disgraceful and entirely unedifying comments from the shadow minister that put a pall upon all elected members at every level of government.

I challenged the member for Warrego on the day, given his stated concern, to write to the federal government asking it to match state government funding in terms of the major infrastructure program in the Torres Strait and also the mainland Indigenous infrastructure program for environmental health. For the Torres Strait we have \$56 million on the table. The Commonwealth government has provided \$12 million. The Commonwealth government talks about caring about what is going on in the Torres Strait but it is \$44 million short in funding. I said to the member for Warrego on the day that I was sure that that meant he would be writing to Mal Brough and requesting that \$44 million.

Some questions remain unanswered from the estimates committee and a question remains to be answered by the member for Warrego: did he in fact approach the Commonwealth government for that extra \$44 million or, more to the point, the \$100 million that we provisioned for mainland communities? The Commonwealth has so far only come up with \$30 million. We have \$56 million and \$100 million on the table. It should come up with the goods as well.

Time expired.