



Speech by

Evan Moorhead

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Hansard Wednesday, 8 August 2007

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G (REPORT NO. 2)

Mr MOORHEAD (Waterford—ALP) (8.56 pm): I rise to speak in support of the appropriations examined by the Estimates Committee G Report No. 2 tabled on 6 August 2007. At the outset I thank the research directorate supporting the committee—research director Julie Copley, research officer Amanda Honeyman and executive assistant Michelle Benham. Their hard work made the job of sifting through pages and pages of budget documents achievable for the committee. I also thank the members of the committee, particularly the deputy chair, the member for Toowoomba South.

This was my first estimates committee hearing and I was proud to be able to chair Estimates Committee G. It was also exciting to see the committee performing a vital democratic role in the scrutiny of executive government. I note the statement of reservation by the member for Toowoomba South criticising the estimates committee process saying that the process does not allow for detailed analysis. Ironically, the member for Toowoomba South then goes on to list 16 matters that he alleges he found through questioning the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries.

Report No. 2 of the committee arises from appropriations for the Primary Industries and Fisheries portfolio and the Communities portfolio. In respect of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, the budget allocations show an increase in allocations to this important area of government. In examining the portfolio statements, there were some exciting initiatives for which allocation has been made, including the continuation of the development of Biosecurity Queensland as a leader in the management of biosecurity risks in Queensland. As well, the committee heard that the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries will continue to meet community expectations for animal welfare.

In respect of the Department of Communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Seniors and Youth and Disability Services Queensland, there were also significant increases in budget allocations to support vulnerable Queenslanders. The committee's considerations included an appropriation of \$100 million for a redress scheme for victims of abuse in Queensland institutions, implementing recommendations from the Forde inquiry. While money will never be able to compensate those who suffered in these institutions in decades gone by, this will go some way to ease the suffering of those people who were considered by the Forde inquiry.

The Communities budget continues its strong focus on children and early years development. The budget allocates over \$12 million to buy six decommissioned preschools in Ayr, Mackay, Nanango, Toowoomba, Beaudesert and, importantly in the Waterford electorate, Beenleigh and convert them to early childhood education and care centres. This is an important strategy to ease the pressure on families and provide child-care services where they are needed—close to primary schools. A further \$10.6 million has been allocated this year to complete four early years centres at Nerang, Browns Plains, Caboolture and Cairns. Another \$2 million will be spent this year to strengthen the department's role in monitoring and licensing child-care centres.

One of the key budget initiatives to support Indigenous communities in Cape York is the funding for the delivery of three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander domestic and family violence counselling services in Cooktown, Thursday Island and Cherbourg, providing outreach services to the Torres Strait, Hope Vale, Wujal Wujal and Laura communities. These budget allocations are a key part of the compassionate Labor budget delivered by the Treasurer and deliver on Labor's commitment to protect those most vulnerable Queenslanders.

I thank Ministers Mulherin and Pitt who appeared before the committee and their hardworking staff who made sure that the information sought by the committee was available and that the committee's questions were able to be answered. Those answers are found in our report. The committee has recommended that the expenditure be agreed to. I commend the committee's recommendation to the House.