



Speech by

**Jason O'Brien**

**MEMBER FOR COOK**

Hansard Wednesday, 8 August 2007

---

## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE C**

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Cook—ALP) (2.56 pm): What a special treat it was to participate in Estimates Committee C this year. It was again a great opportunity to scrutinise the executive of the Queensland parliament and the Queensland government. I am a person who believes strongly that the 18 people who make up the government here in Queensland should be scrutinised quite thoroughly and that it is the obligation of all members of parliament, whether they are from the opposition benches or the government benches: to ensure that the government of the day is doing everything it can so that Queenslanders get the services that they deserve.

I do not think that scrutiny necessarily means something negative. I think sometimes that word has a negative connotation. I think scrutiny can also be about the many positive things that the government is doing in order to assist Queenslanders, whether they live in the member for Gaven's electorate or in my electorate of far-north Queensland.

**Mr Hayward:** Up in Port Douglas.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** Up in Port Douglas, the Torres Strait and right through Cape York Peninsula. Unfortunately, though, I do think on occasions the opportunity to scrutinise is used as a fishing expedition by some members to try to weigh down or burden the machinery of government from getting on with its business.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** No, not the member for Gregory. I would never accuse him of such underhanded tactics. But I think that some of the questions asked were seeking a level of detail that, if it were to be provided, would burden the bureaucracy for weeks on end and would prevent it from getting on with its core functions and duties which Queenslanders expect it to be doing. It is difficult to find a balance between getting information to ensure money is being spent in the way which the appropriation bills indicate it should and bogging those same public servants down by seeking details that really have no bearing on the day-to-day function of government.

**A government member:** Petty stuff.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** Very petty stuff on occasion. I was very pleased to see that one of the things being drilled down on by those opposite that is being reformed by government is the number of grants being put out by State Development. The opposition wanted to know every little detail of every company that the department had given \$2.50 towards so it could check the connections between those people and the government.

Minister Mickel has quite rightly reformed that process. He is going to make these grants larger. The accountability then will also be larger and there will not be so many petty details that people will be able to try to nitpick on and try to trip the government up on for basically political purposes.

This was my third or fourth estimates committee and each estimates committee I have been involved in has scrutinised the Department of Main Roads and Queensland Transport. It is always a great

pleasure to have the minister for those departments appear before the committee. He goes to great lengths to ensure that the information he needs to provide is available and presented in an easily digestible form.

With the few moments I have left, I would like to thank Mr Vaughan Johnson, the deputy chair of the committee and member for Gregory, for his participation and assistance in the smooth flowing of the committee. The member for Gregory is always a perfect gentleman and I think he approaches these matters in the right vein. I would also like to thank the secretariat, Meg Hoban, for her assistance in the smooth running of the committee. In all honesty, if it were not for Meg, the committee would not function at all. She does an enormous amount of work both during the committee process and behind the scenes to ensure that members are informed and have all the information they require.

Time expired.