



Speech by

Hon. Margaret Keech

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

Hansard Wednesday, 8 August 2007

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

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading, Wine Industry Development and Women) (8.24 pm): I begin by thanking all members of Estimates Committee F. I particularly congratulate the member for Mudgeeraba on her expert chairing of the committee. I am particularly proud of the great work that my department and Tourism Queensland have done over the past year. I am looking forward to another year of achievement in a busy 2007-08.

The continued sustainable growth of tourism throughout the state will be driven by the \$48 million Queensland Tourism Strategy, a strategy that is recognised throughout all of Australia. This financial year we will see the continued implementation of the Queensland Wine Industry Development Strategy to develop the quality of our wines and strengthen key partnerships between the tourism, wine and hospitality industries.

Consumer protection remains a priority for the Beattie government and my department. During 2007-08 we will continue to enhance our strong consumer protection credentials, which have been built up since 1998.

Liquor licensing activities will continue to focus on harm minimisation and the promotion of the responsible service and consumption of alcohol. The Beattie government will also improve opportunities for women to achieve economic security by participating in the workforce.

In his statement of reservations and in his response this evening, the member for Caloundra questioned the increased responsibility and workload that the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal has. Therefore, honourable members might have expected that during the hearings the member would have shown some interest in and asked some questions about the tribunal. I can report to honourable members that actually he asked no questions whatsoever on that topic.

If during the hearings he had asked me even one question with regard to dispute resolution, I would have gladly told him that the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal is measured not by how much money it spends but by its efficiency. If he had asked me a further question, I would have said that efficiencies have been achieved through using existing resources such as registry services and the sharing of hearing rooms with other departments. The tribunal provides Queensland consumers with easy access to an excellent low-cost service by using less costly dispute resolution methods such as mediation.

With the Leader of the Liberal Party celebrating his first anniversary and expected to be dumped any week now, I know that the member for Caloundra has had other things on his mind. However, if he had put any effort whatsoever into preparing for the estimates hearings, he would have known that targeting higher risk businesses is the most effective use of compliance resources and the best way to prevent and address consumer detriment. I reported that the measure is to be discontinued in the MPS because it does not provide an accurate measure of the extent of complying businesses throughout Queensland.

During estimates and again tonight the member for Caloundra, whilst personally attacking the member for Mudgeeraba as the chair, referred to a year-old memorandum from Liquor Licensing officers about resourcing levels. Once again, the member for Caloundra was wrong in his allegations about my department. I am advised that the memo was more in relation to junior officers performing senior and complex tasks rather than staffing numbers.

I can advise that subsequent negotiations with staff resulted in upgrades for Liquor Licensing compliancing positions. I am further advised that the issue was managed at departmental level to the satisfaction of all relevant Liquor Licensing inspectors and was fixed long before the member for Caloundra even raised the issue.

In conclusion, I thank my ministerial and departmental staff for the many hours of hard work that went into the preparation for the estimates. What a shame that once again the opposition wasted the opportunity to ask in-depth and probing questions. I am very proud indeed of the work done by the staff of my department and Tourism Queensland, and of the many benefits we bring to Queenslanders.