



Speech by

Peter Lawlor

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (9.34 pm): I support the report of Estimates Committee G which examined the proposed expenditure set out in the Appropriation Bill 2007 for organisational units within the portfolios of the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries, and the Minister for Communities and Disability Services, and that also covered the budget allocation for the Office of the Speaker.

Firstly, I thank our research director Julie Copley, research officer Amanda Honeyman and executive assistant Michelle Benham. As is always the case with parliamentary staff, they were efficient, conscientious and pleasant. That also applies to the Hansard reporters whom I thank, along with the ministerial and departmental staff who approached the hearing in such a professional manner. I thank my fellow committee members and Chair Evan Moorhead, who conducted the hearing with fairness and efficiency.

In listening to the various non-government members, it is particularly disappointing to hear the usual complaints about the ineffectiveness of the estimates hearing processes. Also, there is the usual standard reservation statements. They are all the same. One could just change the name of the committee as was pointed out by other people, including Minister Geoff Wilson.

Mr Horan: Like your standard dorothy dixers.

Mr LAWLOR: I will come to that in a minute. The member for Caloundra complained about dorothy dixers from government members of committees. However, non-government members go on and on with the same question in slightly varied forms, up to six times in one case. Then they complain about insufficient time. They also ask questions about issues that have nothing to do with the budget and questions that have nothing to do with the government, such as when some public company will build a power station. During the debate today one member of the National Party even wanted to ask a question of the minister. That is how dopey he was. Frivolous points of order are often taken, all of which takes up opposition time and then they complain about a lack of time.

Estimates Committee G considered a wide range of topics within the primary industries and other portfolios. The minister for primary industries, the director-general and the department's senior team answered questions on things like the alumni, cultural surveys, biodiversity and much more. The minister showed confidence in asking members of his senior departmental team to elaborate on specific topics and, in particular, science-orientated and technical issues. That is entirely appropriate and was appreciated by the committee. For a process that aims to provide a detailed analysis and informed advice on matters within the portfolio as regards the MPS, information from the experts and the minister is critical and must be applauded.

The extent to which the estimates committee hearings are effective is a function of how effective the opposition is. They say it is ineffective. I rest my case and I commend the report to the House.