



Speech by

Phil Weightman

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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

Mr WEIGHTMAN (Cleveland—ALP) (12.30 pm): I thoroughly appreciated the opportunity to be chair of Estimates Committee B. This committee scrutinised three areas essential to the health and safety of the people of Queensland: Child Safety, Health, Police and Corrective Services. I thank the members of the committee from both sides of the House for the cooperative and collaborative way in which they undertook the task of examining the expenditure of the ministerial portfolios associated with the committee. I thank Deborah Jeffrey and the other parliamentary staff for their tremendous effort in ensuring the smooth running of the process before, during and after the sitting of the committee. Their efforts are greatly appreciated and I enjoyed working with them.

The estimates process was initiated to provide the opposition with an opportunity to closely scrutinise expenditure by every government department and is aimed at raising the level of good accountable government. It is designed to be an open and transparent process which, if done properly, will test the overall levels of knowledge the ministers have in regard to their specific portfolios. It serves to scrutinise the expenditure with regard to those individual portfolios to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are being spent appropriately and effectively.

Being involved in this process has highlighted to me the extent of the effort that the ministers and their departments go to to provide the people of Queensland with the required standard of service from each of those departments. With regard to the Child Safety portfolio, I am pleased to see an increase of \$40 million over last year's appropriation. This is a continuation of increased budgets in the past years. This funding will go a long way to increasing the overall service to children at risk and children in care. There is funding for residential care facilities in the communities of Weipa, Kowanyama, Pormpuraaw, Doomadgee and Aurukun. In this current climate of concern for the safety of children in Indigenous communities, I welcome these initiatives and other initiatives by the minister and her departments.

There were many issues considered by the committee and I congratulate the minister and her staff on the way they provided concise and open answers to some very important issues raised by the committee and, in particular, those raised by the member for Currumbin, the shadow minister for child safety, Mrs Jann Stuckey MP.

The Health portfolio has been the subject of in-depth scrutiny for a number of years now and this year was no different. The shadow minister for health and member for Surfers Paradise, John-Paul Langbroek, ensured that the process was once again of a high standard, and I compliment the Minister for Health on his depth of knowledge with regard to his portfolio.

Once again there has been a significant increase in the appropriation for the Health portfolio as this government continues to work hard to address the issues associated with the provision of health services in this state. While there are many highlights associated with this part of the estimates hearing, I will take this opportunity to mention the work that has been done by the department with regard to improving mental health services in Queensland. This area of health has been overshadowed by other health agendas, and

I welcome the initiatives being put forward by the minister and his department. They should be congratulated.

The final area of examination for this committee was Police and Corrective Services. Once again this government is spending significantly more on these two areas than it has in the past. Law and order and public safety are two areas that I have a keen personal interest in. I welcomed the opportunity to get an inside view into an area where I once worked. There are many budget highlights associated with both departments. The corrective services department needs to be congratulated on the continued capital works program undertaken throughout Queensland. The police department has many new initiatives, such as the introduction of QPRIME, the new database implemented to assist police to manage information in a timely and effective manner; the installation of CCTV in public space areas of watch-houses in Indigenous communities; and the acquisition of an additional aircraft to support police operating in the Torres Strait.

Recruiting has always been a high priority and I am pleased to see that this will continue. I congratulate the minister on her depth of knowledge of both her portfolios and I also congratulate the Commissioner for Police, Bob Atkinson, for his considerable input based on his in-depth knowledge of his department. I thank the shadow minister for police and corrective services, the member for Burnett, Mr Rob Messenger, for undertaking and asking some hard questions. That is what this process is all about. I commend this report to the parliament.