



Speech by

**Rachel Nolan**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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

**Ms NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (11.41 am): Being the chair of Estimates Committee A is not the easiest gig in the world. It is a bit like refereeing a first-grade Rugby League game in that you know you have had a good game if no-one notices that you were even there. You have done badly if you end up with a couple of players sent off and some bloody noses and the thing descending into a brawl and into complete farce. If you do a good job as the chair of Estimates Committee A, the day progresses smoothly, it is civil and it is constructive. Everybody gets on and the information flows freely, just like the game. There are not too many penalties and the game flows freely before you. As the chair of Estimates Committee A, I took on the task to which I was appointed by the parliament with a degree of trepidation, realising that for me there were simply no wins to be had. If I did a good job no-one would know; if I did badly there would be a brawl on the field and it would be all my fault.

I felt in that sense a little bit like Barry Gomersall when he was refereeing the Rugby League game in that while he fronted up to the game and he tried to appear impartial the Maroons supporters knew he wore his heart on his sleeve and knew deep down in his heart just where his sympathies lay. I think that is a bit like chairing an estimates committee. You try to do a good job and you try to be impartial, but it is not really any secret where your sympathies really lay. So I turned up on the day with a degree of trepidation, hoping that I would not do a bad job and it did not therefore become about me. When I got here on that day I read the *Courier-Mail*. Members can imagine my surprise when the front page of the *Courier-Mail* on the day of Estimates Committee A—Tuesday, 10 July—was headlined ‘Secret plot to oust Flegg’. I thought about how surprised Barry Gomersall would have been if he had turned up to referee the game and it turned out the Blues had been brawling with one another—that Mark Geyer was belting into Paul Harrigan before the game had even started.

The softening-up period is usually one side against the other. It is not usually one lot of forwards punching the other before the game even starts. But it turned out in Estimates Committee A that this is how it was—that the captain and the vice-captain of the other side were going to belt each other up before the game even began. I thought, ‘That’s a bit strange.’ This is what the *Courier-Mail* said—

The troubled state Coalition faces a bitter showdown as Nationals leader Jeff Seeney leads a charge to ditch Liberal leader Bruce Flegg.

I thought, ‘Hang on! This isn’t really about me at all! I’ve been sidelined before the game’s begun.’ The article continued—

Mr Seeney has been warned by his own executive that the Coalition faces being dissolved if Dr Flegg remains leader.

The ultimatum has come from the Nationals executive, sparking Mr Seeney to secretly ring Liberal MPs to warn them of Dr Flegg’s ‘intolerable’ position and his negative impact on the upcoming federal election.

The story went on to say—

**Dr FLEGG:** I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, could I ask for your ruling on relevance of this speech to the estimates committee report.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr English): I am listening closely to the member. I will give her some leeway, as I give all members. I give them a couple of minutes to make circular arguments. I am listening closely to the member.

**Ms NOLAN:** This news story absolutely set the tone for Estimates Committee A. This was what happened on the day of Estimates Committee A: the two leaders of the opposition did not cooperate—hardly spoke to each other, looked embarrassed sitting next to one another. As a result, Estimates Committee A only served to distract them from the main game of belting each other up. Estimates Committee A was not about the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party touching up the Premier or the Deputy Premier or the minister for public works and housing. It was about them belting each other up and it was about the committee itself being simply a distraction from that which was the main game.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** If you could come back to the report, please.

**Ms NOLAN:** Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker. That is the state of Queensland politics as it stands today. Estimates Committee A proceeded very smoothly because the opposition was not interested.

Time expired.