



Speech by

Rosemary Menkens

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (8.11 pm): It is a pleasure to speak to the report of Estimates Committee F. I wish to speak specifically about the areas of environment, heritage and multiculturalism as well as women. As we stated in the estimates committee report, it is always disappointing that not enough time is provided to enable the proper and detailed consideration of the expenditure within the budget. However, I do not believe that the committee would have been at all appreciative if we had asked them for another couple of hours.

I welcome increased funding allocations in various areas, although I question and deplore the lack of resources again allocated to parks and wildlife. The government is continuing to underspend on pest and weed management in national parks across the state. It is very disappointing that national parks still do not make good neighbours. That is not the fault of the wonderful park rangers who do the very best they can with limited resources. I applaud their work, because they are dedicated, hardworking protectors of the environment.

I note that quite soon after questions in the estimates committee hearing about the composition of vehicles in the EPA we saw the announcement of new green targets for Q-Fleet. Those new targets will mean very little if they are not backed up with incentives to encourage Queensland motorists to switch to environmentally friendly transport alternatives.

These new targets are a knee-jerk reaction to the coalition exposing that more than half the cars used by the EPA were six- or eight-cylinder gas-guzzling vehicles. Green targets will not make any difference unless the community follows suit. Where are the incentives for members of the community to do that? Where are the incentives from this government to aid the further uptake of green vehicles and thus help bring the prices down to affordable levels? Many people would love to own a hybrid vehicle but at this stage for the majority of them the prices of these vehicles are not within reach.

We have seen from the government a huge impost on vehicle owners by the imposition of added stamp duty to the sale of six- and eight-cylinder new and used cars. This is being hailed as a green initiative. On the surface, perhaps that might sound fine, but has the government really thought about who is being hurt by this initiative? Who are the people who buy second-hand Holden Commodores or Falcon station wagons? These are the battling families living in rural and regional areas who want a large, safe car in which to travel distances—one that will safely carry their family. The government is again slugging the battlers. For heaven's sake, this is the government that is supposed to be supporting the worker. It is stupid legislation such as this that hurts our people. Put a green tax on top of a limousine or whatever, if you must, but why hit a second-hand Holden Commodore, Falcon or similar? The coalition believes in incentives for people to improve the environment, not imposts or punishments such as this.

I refer again to the questions asked during the estimates committee hearing. The minister failed to give a credible explanation for the purchase of existing businesses as part of the \$40 million that has been allocated to purchase supposedly pristine land to enable the expansion of the Springbrook National Park. This has certainly become the department's pet project on the advice of none other than Dr Aila Keto. I

question the department's priorities regarding funding allocations when up to \$40 million can be spent purchasing less than 1,000 hectares of degraded and commercial use land at Springbrook, but only \$4.5 million will be spent to stop the degradation caused by pest and weeds on the approximately seven million hectares of parks and land that is currently under the control of the Parks and Wildlife Service. Sixty-five cents per hectare is now really being stretched even further as more land is bought.

With respect to the Office of Women, it became apparent through questioning that resources are not allocated to tackle the really big issues facing Queensland women, such as domestic violence and maternity services. I question how relevant to the real needs of women this office is and whether the resources allocated to it are sufficient to develop meaningful outcomes. There are some good marketing campaigns, but I ask the minister: what are the realistic and meaningful outcomes and initiatives that this office can claim?

Protecting the heritage and history of our historic buildings is important. The Heritage Council has a responsibility to that extent. The wishes of local communities must be taken into consideration. It is disappointing to see situations such as the Cairns Yacht Club, where there is a huge groundswell of support to preserve the heritage of this historic building, yet the state government ignores its request in favour of further development.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the other members of the committee. I enjoyed their company, not necessarily their comments—

Time expired.