



Speech by

**Ted Malone**

**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

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

**Mr MALONE** (Mirani—NPA) (4.00 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise and speak to the report of Estimates Committee D. I congratulate the chair and members of the committee and, more importantly, I congratulate the staff who supported the committee. The two ministers, Geoff Wilson and Neil Roberts, handled themselves well. I would particularly like to congratulate Neil Roberts on his role as minister of only two days in fronting up to an estimates committee. I believe he did an admirable job under those circumstances.

As others have said, the estimates committee process that we have in place has been in place for quite some time. In lieu of having an upper house it is probably the best system we can have at this stage. As the committee is comprised of four government members and three opposition members, getting a true reflection and an examination of the outputs from the department is always going to be difficult. Quite frankly, the estimates committee process is set up to ensure that the opposition does not have a chance to make any big hits on the department.

For a person standing outside this parliament and looking at the expenditure that the committees are examining, I think there needs to be a strong estimates process so we can be sure that the departments—not necessarily the minister—are doing the very best they can with the dollars that we give them as taxpayers. I am not sure, quite frankly, that in this parliament the examinations are that rigid. The dorothy dixers that come from the government, understandably, are all about making sure that the minister looks good and there is very detailed communication showing the money being expended on the good things in the department. That is always going to be the case.

We have a situation in Queensland where the QAS cannot cope with the increased workload. Quite frankly, that goes back to about 1988 when the then Premier brought out a policy during the election campaign that there would be a free ambulance service for everybody and anybody, without putting the money in to make sure that it had the resources to do that job. Over that period of time the service has tried to cope and unfortunately it is not doing that. We are seeing experienced paramedics leaving the service in droves. Even though the minister indicated that the separation rates were within an acceptable level, I have to say that I do not believe that. The number of people who have talked to me about that matter makes me think that there is something wrong with the correlation of the figures.

I am conscious that at the time the minister had been in the portfolio for only two days, but I found it interesting that on a number of occasions he ruled out that he would meet with interested paramedics or people within Emergency Services unless they were part of a union group. I find that hard to believe. There are groups within Emergency Services like EMSPA, which is a volunteer organisation. To say during estimates that he would not meet with them I find unbelievable, and I hope that the minister will change his mind as he moves through the portfolio.

This year \$15 million of capital expenditure in the budget was not able to be spent, as was the case last year. I raise the issue of the Beaconsfield Fire Station complex built two years ago. It was a disaster zone. Water poured in through the roof, through power points and light fittings. There was mould right

throughout the building. It virtually made the building unusable, and two years later we are still stuffing around trying to fix it up. I find it unbelievable that the department—and I am not criticising the minister—took ownership of that building under those circumstances. These are the things that we need to raise during the estimates process. If we get criticised for that, I will find that unbelievable.

There are problems with the roster system in the QAS. Many paramedics will tell you that they are not comfortable with the hours that they are working and being called back after hours. The union has not represented them properly in this case. Indeed, previous ministers have not made a step in the right direction to look at ways and means of getting around this problem. Quite frankly, until family-friendly rosters are put in place—

Time expired.