



Speech by

Ms Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (11.35 am): I rise to speak in support of the appropriations examined by Estimates Committee D. At the outset I wish to sincerely thank the research secretariat supporting the committee—Ms Deborah Jeffrey, research director; Helen Bogiatzis, senior research officer; and Mrs Marilyn Freeman, executive assistant—and of course all of the departmental staff involved. Their hard and dedicated work made the committee's job much easier and the process smooth and efficient. As this was my first estimates committee hearing, I would also like to thank the chair, Mr Phil Weightman, the member for Cleveland; deputy chair, Mrs Jann Stuckey, the member for Currumbin; and other members of the committee, particularly those who gave me their guidance and advice during the hearings. It was most appreciated.

Estimates Committee D examined and reported on the proposed expenditures contained within the portfolios of three ministers covering wide, diverse and important responsibilities, namely, the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Women, Minister for Tourism, Regional Development and Industry and Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Youth. I found the hearings most informative and welcome the transparency in government that the estimates process brings about. I believe all three ministers—Keech, Nelson-Carr and Boyle—displayed a professional, open and knowledgeable approach to the questioning during the hearing and were all eager to assist to provide whatever information and materials were required.

I do not support comments expressed in the statements of reservation which used words such as 'glib responses', 'unsatisfactory answers' and implied a lack of knowledge of various portfolios. On the contrary, I believe all ministers demonstrated a thorough knowledge of their portfolios, answered in detail all questions asked and went out of their way to ensure that information was provided on many issues raised. I take this opportunity to congratulate the ministers involved on their hard work.

In respect of each of the portfolios, commencing with Child Safety and Women, it was particularly pleasing to note that one of the key priorities for 2008-09 is funding to provide additional front-line staff and additional funding for a major foster care recruitment campaign. I think the foster care campaign has been an excellent recruitment campaign in what is often a difficult area and foster-carers are receiving support, recognition and gratitude for the work they do in this much-needed area of the community.

Another issue dear to my heart in this portfolio is the current review of the Queensland adoption laws, particularly for adoptions that occurred pre June 1991. There is no doubt that law reform in this area is an extremely sensitive issue and one which has often been surrounded by secrecy. I am very supportive and acknowledge that these laws are very clearly in need of a major overhaul while obviously respecting as much as possible the interests of all involved. As an adoptive mum post June 1991, I am very well aware of the sensitivity surrounding this issue and I am very grateful and thankful that my family is part of the newer legislation where there is the ability to access identifying information. I have had constituents come to see me about the review of the adoption laws and I know that they will be taking a keen interest in the outcomes, as I will.

Tourism, regional development and industry is another most important area for Queensland, and I particularly welcome the budget initiatives in this rollout of the Create It Make It Live It manufacturing careers campaign. As we know, for a successful manufacturing industry base for Queensland, it is imperative that we have the necessary skills and training to compete in a global market, and I believe this budget initiative will go a long way to addressing skills shortages in the future.

Details of the tourism rescue packages were also very welcome in the budget, particularly with the recent increase in fuel prices reducing some flights to regional Queensland. Tourism is indeed an important element in Queensland.

I also enjoyed the explanation on nanotechnology given by the minister following my question. It was great that there was also a group of schoolchildren in the gallery at the time who I trust benefited from the detailed answer given. I also welcome the many budget highlights in the department of communities and disability services where there is extra money to support young people and seniors and early intervention and prevention programs for people with a disability and their families. I believe that carers in the disability sector are indeed the heroes of our society. Anything we can do as a government to assist these people, particularly older parent carers, is money spent in the right area.

I also welcome the initiatives in relation to Indigenous communities, organisations and other government agencies to address the gap in the life outcomes and opportunities facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders included in the budget. Queensland is also a multicultural society in which I deem myself an active member. As issues associated with multiculturalism are also dear to my heart, I welcome any budget allocation that provides leadership, policy and engagement in the ethnic communities. I commend the committee's report to the House.