



Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Thursday, 6 August 2009

APPROPRIATION BILLS: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE F

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (12.13 pm): I rise to speak in support of the report of proceedings of Estimates Committee F which examined the portfolio areas of Tourism and Fair Trading, Local Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, and Transport. As a new member, this was my first time on an estimates committee and I found the process to be worthwhile on a number of fronts, particularly because it provides the means by which parliament can scrutinise proposed government expenditure in an open and accountable manner. I congratulate and acknowledge the work of Rachelle Stacey and Margaret Telford, the Hansard staff and other parliamentary staff who were utterly professional in their coordination and assistance of the committee's work.

The committee chair, the member for Cook, managed the hearing efficiently and with fairness. However, at times he required a firm hand to ensure that questioning and proceedings were kept on track. I also want to acknowledge my fellow committee members: the member for Kallangur, the member for Bulimba, the member for Warrego, the member for Mermaid Beach, the member for Burnett, and a special guest appearance by the member for Maroochydore, who certainly livened up proceedings! Ministers Lawlor, Boyle and Nolan performed admirably and are to be congratulated for their informative responses on the day, and so too are the staff from their respective ministerial offices. I mentioned that this was my first estimates committee as a member of parliament, but I know firsthand from my time in the public sector the amount of work undertaken by departmental staff as a result of the estimates process.

I want to highlight just a few of the issues that were considered by the committee. The Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading informed the committee about the harm minimisation measures his department is employing, such as those that address the recent prevalence of glassing incidents in Queensland venues. Queensland already has some of the toughest laws in the country, but the government will work proactively with the liquor industry and police to replace glasses in venues identified as high risk with plastic or something similar by the end of the year in order to prevent more lives being destroyed by this awful practice.

The committee heard from Minister Boyle about the latest quarterly report on key indicators in Queensland's discrete Indigenous communities, particularly improvements in school attendance. The minister also comprehensively covered the many initiatives that the Bligh government is undertaking to improve the lives of Indigenous Queenslanders, including the establishment of the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council, the continued good work being undertaken by the Family Responsibilities Commission, and the establishment of the Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office which will facilitate the construction of some 1,100 houses in remote communities and pave the way for other development.

Despite strong criticism from opposition members, Minister Boyle should be rightly proud of the work that her department is doing for local government in Queensland. The government committed to \$700 million over five years but has gone above and beyond this figure and committed \$880 million in only three years. In my electorate of Mulgrave, the Cassowary Coast Regional Council has been well served. However, Minister Boyle is aware, as I am, that there are a number of projects particularly related to water

infrastructure and sewerage that are not immediately able to be funded but which it will be seeking to fund in the years ahead.

Turning now to the Transport portfolio, I was particularly pleased to hear from the minister about the government's continued investment in road safety campaigns that seek to remind drivers of the shocking consequences that complacency, a lapse of concentration or reckless driving can have. Investment by this government of more than \$7.3 million last year in road safety campaigns such as Share My Story and the new Queensland road safety brand Here for Life is evidence of this commitment to reducing the road toll in Queensland. Like many areas of the state, the road toll this year in Far North Queensland is at an unacceptably high level. I will not blame the roads for these fatalities, unlike local LNP spokesperson Warren Entsch in the Far North, who continues to disgrace himself by using these tragic events for political mileage.

The critical factors in almost all of the incidents in the Far North this year have been speed and driver error, not the road. Does this mean that we should not do more to improve the quality of the roads in my electorate? Of course not. Recent losses on our roads have been tragic but offer a timely reminder that all road users have a responsibility to drive to survive. I want to take this opportunity to commend my colleague the member for Barron River for his recent call for a regional road safety summit. This is exactly what is needed in order to have a mature and rational discussion about addressing the road toll rather than opportunistic and inappropriate remarks from the LNP. Lastly, I do a lot of driving in this job and, along with my fellow far-northern MPs, I have accepted an invitation by local motoring legend Peter Roggenkamp to do a defensive driving course to demonstrate just how seriously I take my driving and hopefully put some others on the same path.