



Speech by  
**Grace Grace**

**MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL**

Hansard Wednesday, 5 August 2009

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## **APPROPRIATION BILLS: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D**

**Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (7.50 pm): I rise to speak in support of the report of Estimates Committee D and express how honoured I was, too, to chair my first estimates committee. Estimates Committee D was appointed to examine and report on the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2009 for the organisational units within the ministerial portfolios of the Minister for Main Roads, the Hon. Craig Wallace, and the Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk, and I commend her on her first estimates hearing. I also wish to congratulate my colleagues Ministers Wallace and Palaszczuk, who were very ably supported by departmental staff and advisers, for a job well done in ensuring that the hearing proceeded smoothly, professionally and was informative.

In addition, I wish to warmly thank the secretariat support for all their assistance and hard work, particularly Ms Helen Bogiatzis, Ms Erin Pasley and Ms Tamara Vitale. The committee would not have been able to operate effectively without their extensive service pre and post the hearing. Also I wish to thank my electorate office, Stella Donatini, who provided me with great support during estimates time.

I also thank the other members of the committee: the member for Maroochydore and deputy chair, Ms Fiona Simpson; the member for Capalaba, Mr Michael Choi; the member for Hinchinbrook, Mr Andrew Cripps; the member for Maryborough, Mr Chris Foley; the member for Whitsunday, Ms Jan Jarratt; and the member for Murrumba, the Hon. Dean Wells. All members took the opportunity of estimates seriously and I commend the manner in which they conducted themselves during the process. They actually made my job as chair much easier.

I would like to address briefly the Main Roads portfolio component of the hearing. I note the \$3.53 billion allocation to roads capital investment, which will sustain jobs for about 3,000 Queenslanders, and which is very much welcome in these tough economic times. Much of that funding will be directed towards major infrastructure projects that will provide the vital road networks that are needed to relieve traffic congestion in what is the fastest growing state in Australia. Projects like the \$1.8 billion Gateway upgrade and second bridge crossing, the Houghton Bridge duplication, the upgrading of the Ipswich Motorway between Wacol and Darra and the completion of the Bundaberg ring-road, to mention but a few, are significant urban and rural roadworks.

However, I am also pleased to report that road safety is also paramount, with the introduction of the open roads initiative and the rolling out of the five-year heavy vehicle rest areas program. Numerous issues were considered by the committee, including tolls on existing and new roads, the widening of the Maryborough-Hervey Bay Road, the incident response plan and even the Q150 bridge naming project. I also welcome the minister's insight into the newly merged Department of Transport and Main Roads and the opportunities that this merger now delivers for road and transport planners.

In relation to the portfolio of Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs, it was most pleasing to see for the third year in a row the Disability Services budget exceeding \$1 billion, with a budget for 2009-10 of \$1.4 billion—a 13 per cent increase on last year. There were many issues raised during the hearing, including funding for specialist disability services, funding for Youngcare, the pilot of a brokerage model for families of children and young people with a disability, and assistance for ageing carers. This budget

demonstrates a clear commitment to vulnerable Queenslanders who need support and services to live happy, productive and fulfilling lives.

In the area of multicultural affairs, the implementation of Local Area Multicultural Partnerships and Community Action for a Multicultural Society and promoting and acknowledging the benefits of multiculturalism for Queensland are most welcome and important initiatives. These programs are excellent ways of recognising the wonderful contribution that multiculturalism has made to Queensland and celebrates the benefits of a diverse society.

In conclusion, I want to refer to comments contained in the statements of reservations by the two shadow ministers. I place on record that I do not agree with their comments. I think the ministers ably handled their answers. In particular, both shadow ministers complained about the lack of time set aside for the Estimates Committee D hearing. When we first met and unanimously—and I repeat, unanimously—endorsed the timetable for the hearing, neither shadow minister raised the issue of time adequacy nor suggested any additional time requirements and/or amendments pursuant to the various portfolios. As chair, I would have been more than willing to accommodate their concerns if I had only been made aware at the appropriate time. I am afraid it is too late to complain after the event. I commend the report of Estimates Committee D to the House.