



Speech by

## Hon. Peter Lawlor

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Hansard Thursday, 6 August 2009

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### APPROPRIATION BILLS: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE F

**Hon. PJ LAWLOR** (Southport—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading) (12.42 pm): I welcome the opportunity to participate in today's debate on outcomes of Estimates Committee F. At the outset I would like to point out some sheer hypocrisy from the member for Mermaid Beach in his dissenting statement. In his dissenting statement he says—

The Government "Dorothy Dixers" are merely propaganda opportunities designed to limit the questioning time of Opposition members seeking relevant and vital information for the protection of the public and media interest. A higher weighting in time for questioning must be given to non-Government members.

What a joke! Of the three non-government members who were on that committee, he asked quite a few questions, the member for Burnett asked none—not one question—

**Mr O'Brien:** It's a beautiful thing.

**Mr Wettenhall:** He's been gagged.

**Mr LAWLOR:** It was very pleasant on the ear, I have to tell you. And the member for Warrego asked one question. So much for that—what hypocrisy. It is the best resourced but the laziest opposition ever in Queensland's history.

I was happy to advise the committee on the day, as I am today, about some of the challenges and opportunities in the various areas of my portfolio. During these very challenging times the Bligh government has one key goal, and that is job protection. With the tourism sector being one of the state's biggest employers, great effort and commitment has been made to ensure that the tourism industry has the tools to deliver on the Bligh government's job promise.

It was the Bligh government that took a \$36 million extra funding promise to the last election. It was the Bligh government that guaranteed the ongoing use of Queensland Investment Incentives Scheme funding to attract airlines. It was the Bligh government that committed to investing in new tourism infrastructure, including the Gold Coast AFL stadium. This new funding has been set aside and will soon be released to Tourism Queensland upon the completion of a detailed marketing plan for the specific use of campaigns that they can prove will directly support jobs and small tourism businesses. Jobs was the Bligh government's promise and jobs is what my department is dedicated to delivering.

The Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing has been given a clear charter by the Bligh government to bring in new aggressive changes to deal with the negative impacts of alcohol and gambling in the community. Liquor and gaming has a role in Queensland but only if it does not destroy Queensland's unique lifestyle.

I would also like to use this opportunity today to respond briefly to a number of other issues raised by the opposition spokesperson for tourism and fair trading. The honourable member raised concerns about the 15 per cent of conciliations not finalised within 30 days. I can advise today that the average time taken to finalise these more complex matters is just 49 days—a proud achievement on the part of the Office of Fair Trading. Investigations can sometimes take a little longer than the ideal 30 days where negotiations are ongoing or in situations where a trader or consumer proves difficult to contact.

As for matters surrounding the liquidation of Coral Coast Homes, I can say today that the opposition spokesperson and I share concerns for the people affected in this unfortunate matter. I can also advise today that, while the Queensland Building Services Authority regulates the building industry and as such Coral Coast Homes falls within its jurisdiction, the Office of Fair Trading began immediate investigation on 2 June 2009, and that investigation continues. The Office of Fair Trading is working hand in hand with the Building Services Authority in its efforts.

I took a question at the hearing about the cost of the Office of Fair Trading's work in curtailing any action on the part of fuel companies to price gouge in the wake of the government's cancellation of the fuel subsidy. What the shadow spokesman failed to understand on the day or since is that these efforts, whilst ramped up substantially, form a very real part of the Office of Fair Trading's regular activity. Neither I nor the Office of Fair Trading support the idea that keeping fuel companies accountable should be a once-off activity. Therefore, it is funded on an ongoing basis out of the regular budget of the Office of Fair Trading. This activity did not require a special allocation because it is something that we do every day.

At a time when the private sector has stopped investing we have seen worrying cultural trends in both alcohol consumption and gambling. I have accepted the challenge on behalf of the government to tackle these issues head on.

I would also like to thank my staff and the team at Tourism Queensland, the Office of Fair Trading and the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing for their assistance in achieving these most important policy outcomes in the future for Queensland. I also thank Hansard, the chairman of the committee and his committee members and all parliamentary staff involved in the hearing.

*(Time expired)*