



Speech by

Hon. Tim Mulherin

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Hansard Thursday, 6 August 2009

APPROPRIATION BILLS: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland) (11.32 am): I want to place on record my appreciation for the work done by the staff of my agency; my ministerial staff; the chair of the estimates committee, the member for Bundamba; members of Estimates Committee E; and parliamentary staff who made the estimates process run as smoothly as possible.

The estimates process is an important accountability measure to examine how the state government invests taxpayers' money. I take it seriously, and anyone who heard my estimates committee hearing knows that I had some robust exchanges with the member for Condamine. For that reason I was interested to read what the member was going to say in his statement of reservations that I assumed he would attach to the report of Estimates Committee E.

Imagine my surprise when the report came out with no statement of reservations from the member for Condamine. The member now goes into the record books. I am told that he is the first opposition primary industries spokesman for over a decade not to submit a statement of reservations. The year 1998 was the last time it happened. The member for Condamine did manage to submit something about estimates to the *Oakey Champion*, in a column dubbed 'Ray's Rounds'. I can only conclude that the member now fully supports everything I am doing in my portfolio and the expenditure plans for the year ahead. The only other possibility is that the member just could not be bothered to submit a statement and does not take this important process seriously.

I note that the member also had something to say last night about my absence from parliament this week. He claimed I was 'missing in action'. I was attending the Regional Development Council annual meeting in Bendigo with ministers from throughout Australia who represent regional development. If the member had one clue about his portfolio he would know that that meeting was on. I was here for his question today. It was based on a totally false premise, as usual, and it was like getting hit by a wet lettuce leaf. He also had the hide to criticise our budget. The core budget had a small cut in these tough economic times, not the \$23 million he claimed. An AgForce media release about our budget states—

... AgForce applauds the general maintenance of the Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries' budget and programs.

...

'We believe these important budget allocations are testament to Minister Mulherin's commitment to his portfolio and to maintaining key agricultural programs in times of financial stress.'

In 2009-10 the government has confirmed a budget for Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries, incorporating the Office of Rural and Regional Communities, of \$335.5 million. There are two key parts to the 2009-10 budget: \$263.4 million provided by the state government and \$72.1 million from sources other than the Queensland government. This includes funding from the Australian government and other state governments through national cost-sharing arrangements; funding from research and development corporations; and contributions by industry to purchase various services, including research and development.

This budget will see us deliver on our commitments to assist Queensland agricultural industries to enhance job creation in rural and regional Queensland. Primary industries are the 'bloom in the gloom'. Despite the sky-caving-in hysterics of the opposition, we will continue our 'disinvest to reinvest' strategy to drive the Fresh Approach agenda. This will be done in consultation with industry. Likewise, we will finalise our plan for the Australian Agricultural College Corporation in partnership with industry. Our aim is to make the corporation the premier provider of rural and related industry training, and we will do that by listening to industry about what qualifications and skills they require for agribusiness today.

The coming year will see us implement the Queensland Biosecurity Strategy and modern legislation associated with the creation of Biosecurity Queensland. In addition, the Fisheries Strategy will be finalised to enhance the economic value of Queensland fisheries on a sustainable basis and support the recreational fishing sector. And the Blueprint for the Bush will continue with greater focus on the economic drivers to ensure the viability of rural and remote communities.

Lastly, the member for Condamine has done an embarrassing backflip over his ridiculous claims in relation to Yarraman. Late last week the member put out a media release talking about 28 people losing their jobs—totally false. This week in the House he talked about 20-odd jobs being transferred to Blackbutt. What a backflip! First he says that 28 jobs are lost and when he gets into the House he says that 20-odd jobs are being transferred. How could anyone take anything the member and his party say seriously when he cannot be bothered with estimates, when they put out misleading media releases and when they try to get taxpayers to pay for \$80,000 in promotional billboards?