



Speech by

Dr Alex Douglas

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (12.40 pm): Honourable members, there is a disconnect between this Labor government's public statements and what is delivered. The disconnect is so markedly different from the printed press releases and the budget statements that it makes the stewardship of two critical portfolios of Estimates Committee A of concern. Those portfolios are Treasury and Public Works and ICT.

I fully endorse the statements made by the shadow ministers responsible for both portfolios, both the general and specific comments. I wish to address three specific areas. They are, firstly, forward Treasury projections and responses; secondly, unsatisfactory responses regarding CorpTech; and, thirdly, the issue regarding delays by Project Services causing great harm and stimulus funding from the federal government being cancelled.

I would also like to further endorse the comments made by the shadow minister—very pointed remarks—regarding the attitude of staff from the minister down at the estimate hearings for Public Works and ICT. I suspect there is an attitude of 'You can't touch us in this department. We are above scrutiny.' I also suspect waste and wasting time is an endemic problem in this department. As any problem usually starts at the top, the Minister for Public Works must take responsibility for this. The culture appears to be externally so bad that it clearly cannot explain the disaster between CorpTech, IBM and the former Paris now Workbrain Health payroll disaster. I take umbrage at what the minister has said. The Paris system is not exactly what was presented as SAP. It was a Canadian model that was reworked as Workbrain.

I too observed both manifestly rude behaviour and ignorance. These two factors have at their core egocentricity, selfishness, and intolerance of others and their opinions. In that environment, decisions can and will be made that may lead to poorly thought through—balanced—decision making. I am completely underwhelmed by any explanation given by the minister or his advisers about CorpTech awarding the Workbrain contract and its stewardship of the process.

Unbeknown to the minister, with the shadow minister I attended a previously scheduled detailed discussion with the department, the director-general and Chris Cummins, the minister's adviser. I took notes and asked detailed questions, as doctors do. All my major concerns at the time, except the question regarding the parallel pay run of Lattice and Workbrain together, were raised. I believe that still has not been satisfactorily answered. In fact, the minister's response regarding why parallel processing did not occur before the go-live order was made was completely unsatisfactory. He either does not understand what a terrible error has been made or he absolves himself of any responsibility by attempting to pass it over to the health minister. The shadow minister's questions were entirely correct and deserved further answers. I believe they still deserve further answers. I would ask that minister, in view of his final comments, to come back and explain himself.

Similarly, I remain very concerned that the minister could provide no explanation regarding the behaviour of Project Services in causing delay primarily in the area of public housing where there is a need to respond to the tight deadlines of significant grants from the federal government under the stimulus package. Without doubt, there is no satisfactory reason that can be given when Project Services, rather

than asking valid questions, chose not to reply and the deadlines came and went. In my seat of Gaven many very needy families needed those homes that would have been built. I believe the minister should apologise to each and every one of them. I believe the Premier should do that too.

In conclusion, I wish to address the Treasurer's responses to specific questioning by the shadow minister, the member for Clayfield. Economic reporting in an accurate and impartial manner is absolutely critical to the success of our state and our nation. There does appear to be either very poor internal reporting or a dearth of significant economic advice. Colin Clark gave Queensland a great start for 30 years under most Labor people until he fell out of favour with Vince Gair in 1953.

Currently, the reports are a manifest paucity of credible forward economic data. This means that under this government we must find another Colin Clark. Labor appears to be unable to function nor escape the scourge of structural debt without such human tools. No wonder the Treasurer's report in such difficult times is such a hodgepodge of nothingness and vacillation.