




Speech by

Howard Hobbs

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Hansard Wednesday, 31 October 2012

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: TRANSPORT, HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

 **Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—LNP) (11.08 pm): I am pleased to speak as the chair of the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee. The committee has made one recommendation as follows—

- that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2012 for the Committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

On behalf of the committee, I wish to thank the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, the Minister for Housing and Public Works, the Minister for Local Government and their departmental officers for their cooperation throughout the process. I would like to thank the other members of my committee who did a fantastic job and particularly the committee secretariat for their hard work and support through that process. I thought they did an exceptional job, and I think the whole committee felt the same way.

In summary, Transport and Main Roads had a budget of nearly \$7 billion, which certainly is a considerable budget. Some of the highlights of the Transport and Main Roads budget include supporting agriculture, upgrading key rail crossings and improving school safety zones. Some of the issues that were raised by the committee during the process also should be discussed, particularly the provision of overtaking lanes on the highway between Toowoomba and Dalby. The member for Condamine, who is sitting beside me right now, I am sure will appreciate the importance of that for the people out there who have faced a serious increase in traffic in recent years, so this provision will certainly be welcomed. I might point out that these overtaking lanes have been promised by many ministers over a long time and this government is the one who will finally deliver them.

One of the other important issues raised was shifting heavy freight from road to rail and related savings in road maintenance and reconstruction. We talked about that. There seems to be a train of thought that there will be significant savings in the budget in the future if we can shift a lot of freight from road to rail.

The budget for Housing and Public Works of \$647 million is also a significant budget and is a change from the previous budget of public works with machinery-of-government changes. Some of the issues that the committee raised included plans to increase available serviceable public housing, reduce the backlog of housing requests, ensure the maintenance of public housing is of a high standard, and review and renew tenancy agreements. The committee also raised the issue of housing needs in the Torres Strait and Cape York and plans to address housing shortages. There is a real issue up there in that area and we certainly want to make some changes for those people who live in those areas. Also, the removal of the sustainability declaration for real estate sales has certainly been a great improvement.

The Local Government budget of \$448 million is another significant budget. Budget highlights for the Department of Local Government include reform of the Local Government Act 2009 and the City of Brisbane Act 2010 to increase the autonomy and effectiveness of local governments and to ensure mayors and councillors have the authority and capacity to make good decisions in the best interests of their

communities. The issues raised by the committee were varied. One of the issues was the cost of the 2007 local council amalgamations and the estimated financial impact on ratepayers which was significant. I think that council debt has gone from \$2 billion at the time of the forced amalgamations to nearly \$5 billion or \$6 billion in the very near future. So there has been a significant increase there and one of the aspects of that is probably the forced amalgamations. In relation to government plans to assist with the increasing costs of developing, maintaining and replacing infrastructure for local councils, that is another significant issue that all ratepayers are going to have to face.

Another issue raised by the committee was the Partners in Government Agreement, which is an agreement that the government has signed with the Local Government Association which will bring together two great levels of government in a cooperative spirit to ensure that we can provide the services that we need for our community. Funding priorities for the \$40 million allocated to assist local governments implement recommendations from the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry was also a significant issue, and many other issues were raised. I recommend the committee's report to the House.

(Time expired)