




Speech by

John Hathaway

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

 **Mr HATHAWAY** (Townsville—LNP) (10.36 pm): As a member of the Health and Community Services Committee I rise to speak in support of our report No. 12. I also would like to thank the Treasurer and the relevant portfolio ministers for the opportunity to review the Appropriation Bill and their insight into their relevant expenditure and strategy for their department across the estimates.

I must admit to having some apprehension on my first budget review and estimates process. Indeed, I was daunted by the prospect of trying to understand the complexities of the budget set against the fiscal constraints that face this government owing to Labor's legacy of addiction to debt and deficit. It is disappointing—although not unsurprising—that we were unable as a committee to produce a unanimous report without a statement of reservation. Here was an opportunity for the opposition committee members to right their copybook and provide non-partisan input into a once-in-a-generation change for Queensland—a change that Queenslanders gave a mandate for in March of this year. All opposition member attendees to the estimates committee bar one were former members and/or cabinet ministers of the previous administration. I note with regret that, by their questions, they reaffirmed their support for the legacy left by an absent Bligh and her 'Boy Wonder' Treasurer. In doing so they should be forever indelibly marked in the records of this House by the pox that was their terminal gift to Queensland.

Despite my disappointment at this lost opportunity, the estimates hearing process confirmed my trust in the executive for the redirection of Queensland's economy and its fiscal repair to get our state back on track and back in the black. It also gave me an insight into the complexity of government, particularly when trying to stabilise debt, arrest interest payments, live within your means and yet still deliver the necessary services that Queenslanders expect and deserve.

I now turn briefly to some of the portfolio areas examined by the committee. Although the opposition members tried to lead the committee with their scrutiny of pointless political gimmicks and spurious rabbit holes of Minister Dickson's official attendance engagements, they missed totally the fact that it was a nascent Newman government within the first weeks—indeed, within 18 days of the election—that announced the cancellation of the previous government's self-indulgent largess of government corporate boxes and event ticketing. They missed Minister Dickson, in a response to my question, outline a commitment of an additional \$4 million to provide an extra 80 country race meetings through new country racing programs, which scheduled extra race meetings for towns and regions such as Roma, Innisfail and Mareeba, to name a few.

They missed his preamble on the government's \$18 million commitment to sport of Get in the Game which already has budding players and sports clubs from Townsville and North Queensland lining up for the three elements of the program. They missed Minister Dickson's response to another question with regard to capital investment in our national parks to improve access and utility to all Queenslanders such as the Under the Radar cross country mountain bike course in Cape Pallarenda Conservation Park. I note Minister Elmes's response to my question on the review of AMPs. The review of AMPs and their efficacy is long overdue and has been well received in the 19 Indigenous communities in which they operate. This

review is clearly welcomed by the Palm Island community who are simply seeking to have ownership of their destiny and the rules which they live under.

While I welcome the Leader of the Opposition's belated and almost grudging compliance with a motion of this House to table the secret cabinet documents pertaining to the Health payroll fiasco, it would have been of far greater utility to the minister and his department, and also, might I add, to our committee's scrutiny of the Health budget, had this been made available when first asked for back in June of this year. I note for the record the \$97 million provision for a doubling of the patient travel subsidy. This will benefit many North Queenslanders who have to travel for medical services and procedures taken for granted in the south-east. I was likewise reassured by the minister's ongoing support for the paediatric intensive care unit for Townsville championed for so strongly by my northern colleagues and me. I welcome Minister Davis's response to a question on the Elderly Parent Carer Innovation Trial as a number of my constituents in Townsville are elderly parents caring for one of their children with a disability.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my fellow committee members and in particular the chair, the member for Redlands, the secretariat, ministers and their department officers for their efforts as I stepped through my first estimates. I commend the committee's report to the House.