



Speech by

Tim Mulherin

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Hansard Wednesday, 31 October 2012

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND INDUSTRY COMMITTEE

 **Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.25 pm): During the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee's estimates hearing, a number of issues were raised and I will touch on a few of them today. First of all, I congratulate the committee secretariat for the wonderful job they have done in supporting the committee. I also acknowledge the work of the chair and other committee members. I thank Hansard and the parliamentary attendants for making the estimates process run as smoothly as possible.

In answer to question on notice No. 11, the Deputy Premier said that the Waratah Coal's China First rail corridor project is still being considered. This means that the LNP government's position is unchanged from that of the previous government. It raises questions as to why, in his media release of 6 July 2012, the Deputy Premier was so vague when mentioning a project that has been promoted by a significant LNP donor. The media release entitled 'Two rail corridors defined for Galilee Basin' was framed to imply that the government was considering only two railway lines. However, as confirmed by the Deputy Premier in his answer to question on notice No. 11, approval for a third line being promoted by an LNP donor is still being considered. When the Deputy Premier was asked why his media statement was not clear about the fact that more than two rail corridor approvals are being considered, he stated that—

I can't understand how the member would reach the conclusion that I did not make it clear.

The Deputy Premier went on to say that his reference to two rail corridors referred to the state using compulsory acquisition powers only in relation to these corridors. That is different to allowing the approval of only two rail corridors. The Deputy Premier has been unclear on this matter.

The Deputy Premier admitted that he had a one-on-one meeting with the Galilee rail proponents and that he did not trust the departmental staff with commercial issues. The Deputy Premier has not specified what 'commercial issues' are not in the ambit of the Office of the Coordinator-General and other senior departmental officers. It has been a longstanding practice for ministers for state development to involve departmental staff in meetings with proponents, rather than conducting one-on-one engagement. It is particularly concerning that the Deputy Premier admitted to having a one-on-one meeting with Professor Clive F Palmer, a significant LNP donor. The Deputy Premier also refused to rule out more one-on-one meetings on projects being promoted by LNP donors in the future.

The Deputy Premier has criticised previous royalty increases as a 'greedy golden goose attitude to mining', while assisting to introduce the \$1.64 billion in royalty increases in the 2012-13 budget. Clearly, the Deputy Premier's political circumstances dictate his response on this issue. The Deputy Premier has also received economic modelling on the impact of royalty increases on the Queensland economy but has refused to release that modelling. The hearing confirmed that the LNP's Royalties for the Regions policy is nothing more than a political stunt. It involves no hypothecation of royalties and is a fixed fund, just like the

previous government's Sustainable Regional Communities fund. This means that any future increases in royalty revenue will not automatically flow through to regional communities and the LNP is misleading Queenslanders by calling it a 'royalties for the regions' scheme. In the hearing, the Deputy Premier refused to confirm whether an environmental scientist or other members of the community will be consulted on the LNP's plans for the streamlining of mining regulations.

In the committee the Deputy Premier made it clear that only industry had been invited to make submissions on streamlining mining regulations as part of the Resources Cabinet Committee. This is potentially the same Resources Cabinet Committee that will be making recommendations on uranium mining in Queensland. The Deputy Premier needs to explain why he will only consult with industry in relation to these decisions which impact on all Queenslanders.

The chief executive of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority was asked why staffing was cut by 22 positions in a year of record expenditure on natural disaster recovery. The Deputy Premier stated that the cuts to Queensland's reconstruction staffing in the largest year of expenditure on record were a result of the LNP government's decisions. The Deputy Premier further advised the committee that despite his Service Delivery Statements showing that the Queensland Reconstruction Authority was to wind up this financial year, a decision was not made to extend the life of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority until after this had received attention in the media.

These are just a few issues raised by the Deputy Premier during the questioning in the state development committee, but they raise some serious questions about the Deputy Premier's arrogant attitude in which he places himself above scrutiny by the media, the parliament and the people of Queensland.