




Speech By
Hon. Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

**APPROPRIATION BILLS: LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
COMMITTEE**

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (8.30 pm): I thank all honourable members for their contributions to this debate on the report of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. I particularly thank the members of the committee: the member for Ipswich, for his due care and due diligence with respect to chairing the committee process, and all the other members of the committee. Despite the fact, as honourable members have said, that the opposition ran out of questions, I think it was a great estimates committee. I might address that matter firstly.

I have here the report, which I have had an interest in reading this afternoon. In the statement of reservation by the honourable member for Rockhampton he states—

Another issue of concern was the time allocated for questions by the Committee.

I will quote further from his statement of reservation—

This year, as was the case last year, there was no consistent time period allowed for questions and answers by both non-government and government members. In fact, the Chair of the Committee, the Member for Ipswich ... commenced proceedings by saying he would operate on a twenty minute sequence. It was initially refreshing to see that he had taken on board the observations made by the Opposition members in their statement of reservation last year, where ten minutes had been ... insufficient time ... This was the format adopted for the first session, but shortly into the second session, the Committee seemed to change from government to non-government questions on an ad hoc basis. In fact, at one stage, in the middle of questions by the non-government members—

and the rest is history. I saw the opposition leader struggling to reach the end of her 20-minute session. This was only about 2½ hours into it. I saw her struggling to fulfil her 20 minutes—

Mr Nicholls: How long did you have?

Mr BLEIJIE: Six hours. Two and a half hours into the six hours the opposition leader was struggling to fill a 20-minute block—and I saw her scratching around—because I was giving short answers, which took the opposition leader by surprise, of course. Then when the opposition leader stopped and said, ‘Mr Chairman, over to the government members,’ the honourable chair said, quite rightly, ‘Oh, we’re fine for the moment. The government does not have any questions at the minute. Back to you,’ there was an awkward silence. I was sitting there wondering if I should still be there. The opposition leader looked at the member for Bundamba and she did not have any questions. The opposition leader then said, ‘Peter Wellington, over to you.’ So within three hours of the committee hearing of six hours the opposition leader had no questions left and then they had to go to the loony, lefty, loopy Independent member for Nicklin.

So I had a little sign that I put up towards the fourth hour of the estimates hearing saying, ‘Am I wanted anymore?’ because I was not getting any questions. Then in the final two hours of my six-hour estimates hearing the Public Trustee was invited to come up and the opposition leader asked, ‘Public Trustee, can you tell us about the important role the Public Trustee plays in Queensland?’ I said, ‘Hang on, this should be a government question.’ So it was quite uneventful, uninspiring, boring—

Mr Nicholls: I think your answers were good.

Mr BLEIJIE: The answers were exceptionally good, if I had the opportunity to get asked a question. But anyway, life goes on. It was uneventful.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General has an appropriation of about \$800 million a year. The best the opposition could come up with in the first five minutes of the estimates hearing was the question by the member for Bundamba asking why I attended the Chaplain Watch fundraising event in the Valley and my ministerial office paid the \$50 ticket. Out of an \$800 million appropriation, that is the best the opposition could come up with—a \$50 ticket. As a minister, I was invited to an event and my office said, 'Yes,' and paid for the event. That \$50 was the biggest issue that the Labor Party could raise with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

Mr Nicholls: They were focusing on the issues.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the Treasurer. They were focusing on the big issues of the state.

Mr Nicholls: Did they ask about the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre?

Mr BLEIJIE: They did ask me about the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre. I had to set them on the path that, if everything had gone by the book, it would have been open by now. It would have been under budget, of course. But the Labor Party could never do anything on time—

Mr Nicholls: How many years have they promised that?

Mr BLEIJIE: They could never do anything on budget, as the honourable Treasurer says.

The estimates committee hearing was absolutely uneventful. This government has a clear commitment to the people of Queensland. We are getting the basics right. This is a great state with great opportunities. We are rebalancing the scales of justice. We have hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars—millions of dollars—going out to victims of crime groups right around Queensland. I thank all honourable members for their contribution. I thank the honourable Treasurer for the great job that he is doing to try to once and for all get this state back on track so that this state can have the fiscally responsible government that it deserves.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): Order! Attorney-General, during your contribution there were some unparliamentary comments made. I ask that you withdraw them.

Mr BLEIJIE: 'Loony, lefty Independent member for Nicklin'. I withdraw. Just clarifying, those were the words.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those were the words. If you can withdraw them.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker.