




Speech By
Trevor Watts

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (7.55 pm): I rise to speak on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report of the budget estimates hearing. First, I would like to place on record my thanks to the secretariat and all the staff who do a lot of hard work in the background to make sure these hearings and our regular committee meetings work well. I would also like to thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for chairing our meetings. I think you gave the opposition great latitude, sometimes letting them talk for 25, 27, or 28 minutes. They asked question after question, so much so that they actually ran out of questions on a couple of occasions. The Attorney-General was answering all of the questions they had and on a couple of occasions they ran out.

A government member: Embarrassed!

Mr WATTS: I would have been embarrassed. We had plenty of questions to ask but we wanted to give the opposition an opportunity to ask questions and it was embarrassing for them when they had none. I also need to thank my colleagues on the committee as well as the member for Logan, who joined the hearing for the day. I really appreciate that.

I note that earlier the Deputy Premier said that the whole point of estimates is to set the agenda, the broad theme. The broad theme coming from our Attorney-General and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General is to be tough on crime. The legislative agenda that we have brought into this House clearly shows that we have been tough on crime. I am sure that the people of Toowoomba North appreciate all of the legislation that has come forward, whether it be legislation that tightens up the ownership of weapons or hooning. Lots of different areas have been tightened up and, if time permits, I might come back to some of those.

Another interesting part of our broad theme in government and particularly in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General is the delivery of efficient service. The taxpayers of Queensland have precious dollars which we use to deliver the services that they require. A great innovation that demonstrates that efficiency can be seen in the JP program in QCAT. That assists in providing swift justice in an affordable manner such that we can reduce some of the waiting lists that we inherited. I note that the clearance rates for several categories in relation to various courts were all over 100 per cent. They are now all operating more efficiently than previously.

Another theme of the Newman government is the cutting of red tape. I note in particular the cutting of red tape in relation to the Liquor Act, and I look forward to seeing more red tape cut. That is an industry with which I have been heavily associated that is completely overregulated. Once the expert panel submits some of its proposals and the Attorney-General hears those, I look forward to legislative solutions that will get big government off the back of industry so it can operate efficiently, safely and effectively, delivering good opportunities for people to go out and experience Queensland's hospitality and tourism without having to stand there filling in forms for hours and hours that then have to be posted to a bureaucrat.

The department itself has been well administered. I understand that there are several innovations which have been operating, and one of them is in youth justice. I think implementing the government's response to the review of the Youth Justice Act 1992 has been an important innovation. Many communities have been interested in the boot camps that have been offered, and certainly the people of my electorate of Toowoomba are very interested in these intervention camps. I did ask the Attorney-General a question about that, and he told me there was no funding for Toowoomba at the moment and that these trials need to finish in other places first, but I look forward to the time when they will be available in my community.

I would like to thank the Attorney-General, the department and all of the staff and various statutory officers who were there on the day. I think they all openly answered the questions which were put to them. It would have been good if the opposition had had more questions, but unfortunately they did run out of them on a couple of occasions. I thank the Attorney-General for delivering on the Newman government's agenda.