Speech By
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MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2); APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—KAP) (5.04 pm): I rise to speak to Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2014. The explanatory notes state—

On the recommendation of the Treasurer, the Governor in Council authorised unforeseen expenditure that occurred in the 2013-14 financial year, that is, expenditure from the Consolidated Fund in excess of the amount provided by the Appropriation Act 2013, in accordance with section 35 of the Financial Accountability Act 2009. Payments from the Consolidated Fund, including unforeseen expenditure, must be formally authorised under an Act of Parliament in accordance with section 66 of the Constitution of Queensland 2001.

The fact that it says that it must be authorised has been put in place to ensure that there is good governance. At the same time, whether in opposition or on the crossbenches, it is important to give supply to the government to go about its general business. There are times of emergency when the Cabinet Budget Review Committee must look at emergency funding for different areas that are important to particular regions. In the past I have applied for funding for certain projects and asked for support from the Cabinet Budget Review Committee for priority areas that were a danger in my electorate. However, it is also important that we do not squander money.

Sometimes the government needs to ensure the appropriation of funds, and I give the example of Upper Barron Road. That is a major arterial link and we have been pushing for many years for funds for that road to be sealed. It is a major arterial link from Malanda through the Gregory Developmental Road to Emerald. However, every year that road just gets graded. There have been a lot of accidents and people are not using that road. If the appropriate funds were given straightaway, we would never have to worry about repairing that road year in, year out and that money would be saved. That is good governance. The explanatory notes continue—

Timely consideration of unforeseen expenditure enhances transparency and accountability of Government expenditure. As such, supplementary appropriation is sought via a separate Appropriation Bill as soon as possible after the end of the financial year rather than combined with the annual Appropriation Bills introduced next year at Budget time.

It is disappointing that the exact details of the expenditure have not been categorised, so we do not know exactly what it is. We know that the departments have expenditure and that there has been overexpenditure in each department. Bucketloads of cash, such as the $80 million mentioned, have been put into Ashgrove. Obviously with this bill the government needs to draw down more money because some of that money will be going into the seat of Ashgrove. There were also not only the payouts for sacked public servants but also then the re-employment of those sacked public servants. This was an expenditure that was not only unforeseen but also unforeseen by the people of Queensland because they were promised that public servants would be well looked after. We can see why the government is coming back to the parliament to try to get more funds because this unforeseen expenditure has taken place. We were also quite surprised at the massive amount of money that has been spent on advertisements promoting the government.

When we look at the Appropriation Bill, we need that money. We need supply. The only way that we can get money into the state is through two different areas. One is through taxation and the other is through receiving money from our profitable assets. This income from these assets comes in year in, year out. I can remember economists saying that we are $1 billion or $2 billion short of funding. Of course we are billions of dollars short because, with the coal component of Queensland Rail, we raked in $1.2 billion a year. That is $1.2 billion that could have been coming back to us year in, year out. So what do we have to do? We have to find money from somewhere. That is why we are here today debating this bill. We are here to pass legislation so that we can give more money to the departments, because that money is not flowing in. We privatised the above-rail assets and right now $470 million is not coming into the state. In terms of the retail arm of our energy sector, last year the retail companies made $1.1 billion from selling electricity. That is nearly $3 billion that we now do not have year coming in year in, year out, coupled with the income from ports and Plantations Queensland.

With these appropriation bills we are giving more money to the departments. But we also want good governance. If we sell our remaining assets, the state will have less income coming in. So where do we get that lost income from? Taxation or extra charges on our bills. That is the only way we can do it. That is why we have to be very careful when selling our profitable assets that are income producing. That is income that comes back to us year in, year out.

We have to question the cost benefit analysis of what we are going to lose over the next 20 years. There is talk about sport stadiums that are going to be built out of the money from selling our ports. There are a massive number of jobs created by our ports and the income generated by our ports comes back to us. There is sugar transported by rail to the ships. The farmers send their products to those ports. That injects a massive amount of money into the economy. And what are we talking about? Selling our ports for a sports stadium, just to give a little bit of a sweetener.

In terms of this Appropriation Bill, yes, we will always have an overspend in various areas. But we need to spend the money in the right areas. We should not have to come in here and allocate money because we sacked 15,000 Public Service employees and then we put some of them on contracts because we want people to forget at the next election about that rash decision that was made earlier. I wanted to bring that to the attention of the House.