




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee, Report

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (4.43 pm): This is my first response to an estimates hearing of the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee. First and foremost I would like to acknowledge and say thank you to the staff of our committee. They do a wonderful job and they should be recognised: Erin Pasley, research director; Margaret Telford, principal research officer; Mary Westcott, principal research officer; and Dianne Christian, executive assistant. I would also like to thank the committee members and the chair, Jim Pearce, the member for Mirani, and the deputy chair Michael Hart, the member for Burleigh. Michael, our thoughts are with you. I think we have a good committee and we do work well together.

There are just a couple of issues that I would like to raise with regard to estimates. One of the big issues that I always want to talk about—and it is important that I do talk about it—is Western Queensland rail and rail services to regional Queensland. It is the lifeblood for us in regional Queensland. It is such an important service. During estimates I was a little concerned and disappointed that the Deputy Premier would not detail the current community obligation payment to Aurizon that is to be applied to regional rail services because of commercial-in-confidence despite the Service Delivery Statement highlighting the increased expenditure on the Lawnton-Petrie line here in the south-east that will be offset by a decrease in funding for regional rail services.

We need to be clear and we need to let the people of western and regional Queensland know—whether it is the Quilpie line, the Winton line or the Longreach line—exactly what is happening with the new contract that has been negotiated and what the key performance indicators are that Aurizon needs to put in place to deliver this service. I think it is only fair that people in the west get that explanation so they understand what sort of service they are getting with this new contract.

One of the other issues I would like to discuss regarding the estimates process was in relation to Dr Anthony Lynham, the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines. The minister was unable to explain to the committee why the government had adopted a contradictory position regarding the release of unallocated water in catchments that had concurrent EIS processes underway despite both of them being within a single water resource planning area. Of course I am talking about the Gilbert and Flinders rivers. While the Gilbert and Flinders are a little bit further north of my electorate, I do see the need for regional development. While we need to develop the Flinders, we also need to develop the Gilbert River area. It has huge potential and can provide the jobs needed in that region while we are under drought.

Another issue that I am concerned with and would like to talk about is vegetation management. The Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Dr Anthony Lynham, could not explain how he would reconcile Labor's election commitment to repeal the former LNP government's common-sense changes

to the Vegetation Management Act with the stakeholder roundtable review process he had established. The minister stated emphatically that it would be improper for him to fetter the outcome of the stakeholder review process, but when asked how he would reconcile any difference between Labor's election commitments and the recommendations that came out of the review process, the minister was forced to admit that all stakeholders came to the round table knowing Labor had made certain election commitments. The minister could not say that the recommendations of the vegetation roundtable process would determine any changes to the Vegetation Management Act; therefore, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the review process certainly is fettered by Labor's election commitment and, regardless of the recommendations of the stakeholder round table, Labor will proceed with its election commitment.

Vegetation management under the former government was a good thing. It received a good response from landholders, who welcomed the common-sense changes to vegetation management that allow them to get on with the job and farm and also understand that they are the custodians of their land. They understand how to manage their land. There is confusion currently out there. People are wondering what is going to happen, when the changes to the vegetation management laws are going to happen under Labor and when will they follow on from their election commitment. This is worrying many landholders in Western Queensland.

I call on the Labor government to leave the vegetation management laws the way they are. They work with landholders, they work with the community and they provide jobs and increase production to provide more jobs in regional Queensland. Please leave the vegetation management laws alone. They are sensible and they need to be left intact.