




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR LOGAN**

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## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL**

### **Agriculture and Environment Committee, Report**

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (7.40 pm): We in the Agriculture and Environment Committee bear a great responsibility to the thousands of Queenslanders who work in agriculture, including the many in my own seat of Logan who produce on the banks and also on the flood plains of the Logan River some of the cleanest and healthiest produce that is grown in Queensland. Many Queenslanders, not only in Logan but also across our state and indeed internationally, look to us to bear the responsibility of being the guardians of our great natural heritage, including the Great Barrier Reef but also our wonderful national parks and other environmental areas that are worthy of protection.

As a new member of this place I was interested in the process of the committee asking questions about the budget. I assumed there would be great detail as we delved into the budget, examined individual line items, the execution of them and the performance criteria, but instead I was somewhat disappointed. I did notice that the member for Mount Isa asked questions that addressed the very nature of the portfolios. He asked about the profitability of farms and the prices at the farm gate. He asked about sustainable farming and the strategies that the minister was using to try to encourage the profitability of farmers and their sustainability. However, many of the other opposition members who were asking questions did so not to delve into the detail of the government's response and budget but instead to score points possibly for the next day's newspapers, which I found disappointing when this was such a great opportunity.

We got to play 'protection racket bingo', where phrases that were the lines of the day were put by opposition members and used regardless of the circumstances. In this I have to commend the chair of the committee who gave enormous leeway to the questioners. I myself would have ruled every single question of the opposition out of order because they seemed deliberately intent on asking questions—

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr POWER:** I agree. Some people do not know the process, member for Lockyer. They do not know that questions have to address the budget before them, they are not to make inferences or engage in personal innuendo. If the letter of the law were followed, many of the questions would have been ruled out of order. I commend the chair of the committee who allowed much leeway to the members of the committee to put questions. I also commend the ministers who took it in good spirit and attempted to give serious answers to the questions put to them. I appreciated that.

I was disappointed there were questions about protection rackets. There were questions about stationery: endless questions about the removal of a single letter off the stationery. There were attacks obviously aimed at getting a news story for the next day. There were questions about policing in the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries which obviously fell on fallow ground as they should have been asked on different days. There were very few questions about the Great Barrier Reef and its importance

and value to Queenslanders and how we were making representations to the world to show how we were protecting it. I was disappointed that the opposition could not ask those questions.

Another difficult and serious matter was the personal attacks on public servants that I found disappointing. When a public servant takes the opportunity to stand for their views publicly and politically they should not be attacked for it, but that is what we saw. There was an allegation of favouritism. We had to look to see whether this public servant had indeed been promoted in the department. There was tension as we waited. We found out that this person had not been given any preferential treatment or promotion but had recently been promoted by the LNP for their work. It was the height of hypocrisy. There is a soldier standing for election this weekend. Will the LNP question his integrity if he has to return to the Army because he took the opportunity to participate in our democratic process? I hope they will not do this again.