




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL:
PUBLIC WORKS AND UTILITIES COMMITTEE**

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (11.21 pm): I rise to speak to the budget estimates report by the Public Works and Utilities Committee. I have to say that, in spite of some of the negative comments made by members in the House this evening, I enjoyed my day at estimates. I thought there were moments throughout the day that were quite productive. I particularly acknowledge the role of the chair, who was particularly generous in giving more time to the opposition, albeit that some of the government ministers chose to chew up that extra time with policy statements, long-winded explanations around strategies, a lot of waffle and muddled statements.

My understanding of the estimates process is that it is a day to ask the hard questions. The disappointing thing about the day for me was that every time we tried to ask the hard questions the chair protected his ministers. Of course he would, because two of them were just filling in for the day to cover for the former disgraced minister who is no longer there. There was a lot of protection going on on the day and a lot of frustration on our part as our shadow ministers tried to ask some of the hard questions.

I want to respond to the comments by the Minister for Housing around the Queensland Housing Strategy. I think I heard the minister a few minutes ago accuse the LNP of being spin doctors in our statement of reservation. I can assure members that the Queensland Housing Strategy is spin at its best. It is a great big shiny bauble—a cruel, shiny bauble that has been hung out in front of those many hardworking social welfare organisations and community support organisations across the state with the promise of more housing, better housing and better support in public housing.

As with so many of the figures we heard on the day during the estimates hearing, the numbers just do not add up. One of the questions I asked the minister and the director-general was very simple. For the past four or five years the government has spent somewhere between \$400 million and \$500 million a year providing public housing assistance grants to community organisations across the state. If you do the maths, it is about \$450 million a year. The Housing Strategy is worth \$1.8 billion—or in the document \$1.6 billion. It seems to contradict itself. I am still struggling to understand the variance. I am looking forward to the department's briefing on the Housing Strategy at our next committee meeting. The simple question is: if it is additional and new money, can the housing providers and the welfare organisations across the state that are looking forward to this Housing Strategy look forward to an average spend of somewhere between \$500 million and \$700 million a year? We did not hear the answer. That is what concerned me on the day.

Mr McEachan: They were panicked.

Mr MOLHOEK: They did look panicked. They struggled to answer the question. There were furtive looks between the minister and the director-general. You only have to look at *Hansard* to see that that question was not clearly answered on the day.

I understand that the estimates process is about interrogating the government. That is what we attempted to do on the day. I commend the member for Burleigh for his questioning around energy prices. Again, we did not really get the answers we wanted from Stanwell Corporation about the excess dividends and where that money was going to be spent.

Across-the-board, the day was in many respects disappointing. It was a great opportunity to ask questions. My sincere hope is that in future estimates hearings there will be less government rhetoric and less opportunity for the government to waffle on, make great platitudes and hang out its shiny baubles and that ministers will be prepared to answer the hard questions, just like any corporation would expect of their boards of directors at budget time.