




Speech By  
**Steve Minnikin**

**MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH**

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL:  
INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (4.28 pm): I take great pride in rising to speak about my contribution to the estimates process. I say at the outset that I concur with some of the other speakers when they say that the estimates committee process is fundamentally important to democracy. I take the opportunity to thank the committee members and the staff, particularly—I know that his name has been mentioned here previously—David Glasgow. He was an absolutely first-class person to conduct the estimates process with.

I made it clear when I was addressing the minister sitting across the chamber that, wherever practicable in this particular shadow ministerial portfolio as it pertains to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, there always should be as much reach as possible in relation to trying to find areas of commonality. Again today I give that commitment to the minister.

As I have said already, the estimates process is a very important process. It gave me the opportunity to ask some questions. I will go through some of them. I referred the minister to Budget Paper No. 4 at page 73 with regard to the issue of the 'Indigenous performance' budget allocation. I asked the minister if he could tell me what specific performance indicators were in place to measure whether this money is indeed well spent—in other words, the effectiveness of this particular spend. For the benefit of the House, it is just over \$2 million. The minister's response was—

Rather than take up time now, we will take that on notice and get back to you about that.

I was hopeful that there might be some kind of response along the lines of a great report that was produced by Sara Hudson from the Centre for Independent Studies. I think her report encapsulates it quite well. I was expecting the minister to maybe come back with something like this. She said—

There is a level of frenetic chopping and changing, and policy pulsing, that comes with electoral cycles and as the political pendulum swings from left to right ... decision-making in Indigenous policy feels much like a merry-go round ...

I was hoping for a little bit more detail in relation to the minister's response, but I moved on because what I really wanted to get at the very heart of was some kind of meaningful response to a follow-up question I had in relation to closing the gap. As I have previously stated in the chamber, the Closing the Gap report is a very sad indictment. There are seven key indicators and areas, six of which are not even close to being closed. As I also raised in the estimates process, collectively between the feds, the states and the territories over the last decade as a society we have spent well and truly in excess of \$40 billion. I was hoping to get some kind of inkling or undertaking from the minister, at least from Queensland's perspective, as to how effectively this money is being spent. I then followed that up with a line of questioning in relation to possibly looking at a whole-of-government approach and maybe making sure that this particular department was given the full impetus of maybe perhaps coming underneath the purview of the Premier's department directly—in other words, a whole-of-government buy-in. When I put that questioning to the minister, his response was—

I might refer to the director-general on that.

I will cut to the chase here: at the end of the day it seems to me a procession of ministers come to this place with each and every budget and they look down the camera lens or to the Speaker or to people in the public gallery and they give their heartfelt plea that they will try and do something different. I put it to the minister that it indeed is time to try and do something different because in the last few weeks and beyond that I have had dialogue with Aboriginal elders in Hope Vale, Wujal Wujal and Mossman and they are all saying the same thing: rather than give their collective communities, say, \$100,000 on some program that comes and goes based on the budget cycle, give them maybe only \$10,000 towards something that their communities want. We need to change this space. In that regard I again reiterate to the minister: whatever it is that I can do, as much as practicable, in a bipartisan approach I will do so but, at the end of the day, we need to get serious. We have had over a \$40 billion spend and over 10 years we have very little to show for it as a collective society. It is about time we got fair dinkum with this particular approach. Really, you could pick up a blank bit of paper and use that as a metaphor to start from scratch. We need to get serious.