




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Economics and Governance Committee, Report

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (6.47 pm): I rise to speak on the estimates committee report for the Economics and Governance Committee. I would like to thank the government members for their protection racket. There is a reason they ran that protection racket. They know that they have weak ministers. I would, firstly, like to address the protection racket and the appalling behaviour of some of the government members during the estimates committee process.

The chair of the committee is either a poor listener or he is hard of hearing because he had to personally review nearly every question asked by the opposition members. The member for Logan deliberately proceeded to interrupt the estimates proceedings, taking up the time allotted to opposition members. His question reviews were totally unnecessary as the opposition questions did not offend standing orders. It was quite appalling and really disappointing behaviour from those backbench members and also the committee chair. The other government members used frivolous points of order to waste time and avoid scrutiny of their ministers.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members.

Ms LEAHY: It was a deliberate attempt to avoid scrutiny and protect their weak ministers. A total of 40 minutes was allocated to the opposition to ask questions on the Service Delivery Statements, which comprised four pages dedicated directly to the local government service area.

Unfortunately, under this government in the SDS local government is shrinking and scrutiny has been seriously eroded. It is our view that the Economics and Governance Committee hearings lacked openness and transparency and that government members were manipulating proceedings and misusing the standing orders. Even former Speaker John Mickel expressed his concern about how they were using backbench members and their numbers on the committee to protect ministers. To demonstrate this fact, only 50 out of the 89 minutes of question time allocated to the opposition for the Premier was allowed, and 39 minutes of that time was wasted because of disruption with points of order.

When it comes to local governments in Queensland, they do provide an essential suite of services in our communities: they employ some 40,000 people; there are 77 councils—maybe we should say 76; and they manage \$108 billion in assets, including 153,000 kilometres of local roads; \$25 billion in water and sewerage infrastructure; public libraries, parks, playgrounds and lots of local roads that many constituents across Queensland utilise every day. We in the LNP opposition support the hard work of local governments and their elected representatives and the work they do on a daily basis.

The estimates committee process is a key opportunity to scrutinise the appropriateness of the programs that the state Labor government runs for local government and see whether the administration meets the needs of local governments and the communities they serve. The LNP members do have reservations about how well informed the committee was as a result of the estimates committee process. It did not sufficiently allow for considered deliberations, and it failed to provide a level of scrutiny of the government's use of taxpayers' money.

I remember years ago when Di McCauley was the minister for local government she spent a whole day taking questions from the Labor Party. Now it has been reduced to 40 minutes of scrutiny. I think it is disappointing when we look back at what has happened with the estimates committee process, because it has been wound back and wound back so that it does not necessarily serve its purpose. I can remember when the minister for natural resources would be questioned for a whole day. They would have very significant SDS program statements, they would have to know every line that dealt with every part of the state and they would have to understand it. They did not have the option of calling their departmental officers because that was the way the standing orders operated then. They had to know it themselves and they had to answer the questions—

(Time expired)