




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2018

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, Report

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (2.15 pm): I rise to speak on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's estimates report. I would like to begin by thanking the staff of the committee: Renee Easten, Mary Westcott, Kelli Longworth and Hannah Wilson. They all worked very hard indeed and, with their usual good humour and professionalism, kept us all moving. I also acknowledge the appearance on the committee of the members for Kawana, Toowoomba South, Toowoomba North, Gregory, Maiwar and Noosa.

Unfortunately, that is where the positive story ends for this year's estimates. What is supposed to be an opportunity for the parliament to scrutinise the government on behalf of the people of Queensland was turned into a farce of cover-ups and obfuscation. The handling of estimates was one long virtuoso demonstration of the arrogance of this government. We saw the government abuse its numbers in an orchestrated effort to stop it from being subjected to genuine scrutiny. The government abused the standing orders to protect ministers, to provide long and uninformative answers and to frustrate the committee's role in exposing the truth. I have heard the carping interjections of the members opposite: 'You should have crafted your questions properly.' I think that is utter nonsense. The estimates hearing was being run like an absurdly regimented question time with farcical interpretations of the standing orders being used to rule out questioning and excessive delays in accepting documents for tabling in order to waste the precious time of the committee and prevent us from getting to the truth.

One example that I came across myself was when we were asking questions of the Commissioner of Police and he attempted to hand the question up to the minister, which I objected to under standing order 181, but I was overruled and told by the minister himself and by the committee that I did not understand the standing orders. That is the type of behaviour that went on. It is no secret. Everybody knows that this is what went on.

Seasoned watchers of the parliament, including journalists and former Labor ministers, remarked that Labor's handling of things made this the worst estimates in a very long time. Today we have heard my colleagues the members for Condamine, Bundaberg and Gympie talk about the contributions from journalists like Chris O'Brien, from former Speaker John Mickel and from our current Speaker Curtis Pitt about the poor standards.

The five minutes I have could not possibly allow me to even scratch the surface of estimates this year. I am sure my honourable friends, the shadow minister, the members for Toowoomba North, Toowoomba South and Gregory, will have more to say about the government's use of taxpayers' funds with respect to their portfolios areas.

Why were things so bad? The answer is clear. It was Labor. Labor has much to hide and a dreadful budget to screen from scrutiny. What else would we expect from this debt addicted, high taxing fat-cat regime, this rump with its growing army of senior bureaucrats, its extravagant perks and its glove

puppet ministers who are all beholden and indebted to their union boss puppetmasters. No wonder they cannot possibly resource law and order and community safety in this state. They cannot resource anything properly, it seems. Their priorities are all wrong. Let me give some examples. We know that between the last budget delivered by the LNP and the one we saw from the Labor government that the Queensland Police Service is \$134 million worse off. Let us look at some of the ways that that money might be spent elsewhere. Let us have a look at some of the priorities that the Labor Party has.

The budget contains a total of \$45 million for a project to build bikeways in inner-city Labor electorates. That is an absurd amount of money. That could fix the Gore Highway between Goondiwindi and Millmerran in my electorate. It could provide better funding for the Child and Youth Mental Health Service, which is so important. It could provide 4,000 kilometres of dog fencing to protect our drought-stricken farmers from attacks on their stock. It could also fund much needed water infrastructure to protect our farmers, workers, small businesses and townsfolk from future droughts. This estimates hearing was a disappointing farce. The people of Queensland expect better from their government.