



Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Transport and Resources Committee, Report

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (5.58 pm): I rise to speak to the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill. I would like to thank the LNP committee members: the deputy chair, the member for Gregory, Lachlan Millar; the member for Toowoomba North, Trevor Watts; the member for Callide, Colin Boyce; and the member for Lockyer, Jim McDonald, who stepped in to fill a vacancy.

The estimates process was run with an extremely tight time frame with very little time to prepare to ensure that we were holding the government to account. Some of the issues that we were able to pursue in this time were as follows. Let me begin with the Minister for Energy.

The opposition sought to get some clarity about the phase-out of obsolete tariffs and the concern around this phase-out, particularly for the agriculture sector. That answer was vague at best. Of great interest and disappointment to the people of the Burdekin was the redirection of \$100 million in promised funding originally meant to be spent on the Burdekin Falls hydro-electric scheme.

An opposition member: Gone.

Mr WEIR: That funding has gone to the Karara wind farm project. On the subject of wind farms, it was very disappointing to hear that the minister was more interested in personal attacks rather than answering questions from the member for Callide regarding issues concerning the Coopers Gap Wind Farm.

This minister likes to talk loudly and at great length about all the hydrogen projects in Queensland, so I was astounded when neither the minister nor the director-general could answer a question as to how much government funding was for green hydrogen projects and how much was for brown hydrogen projects, instead taking this question on notice. The response was provided prior to finishing that all the funding was going to green hydrogen, as I expected and as I thought the minister would know. The fact that the minister could not answer this question regarding public moneys for this much vaunted project says much about how much the minister is across his portfolio.

Now let me turn my attention to the session on natural resources. This is a minister who had absolutely no understanding of his brief and simply read long, rambling bureaucratic responses to the questions asked of him. It was no coincidence that this session was held after dark on a Friday night. Questions were put to the minister regarding the high number of successful appeals against property valuations, the long-running dispute on Keswick Island, fossicking laws and stock routes, among others. All questions were answered in the same manner.

The minister spoke in the estimates hearing and again today about his support for coal. This is cold comfort to the workers at New Hope Acland mine who are about to lose their jobs or to those who have already lost their jobs. These workers have called on this minister to step in and grant the approvals to save their jobs. However, the minister refuses. Instead, he intends sitting on his hands awaiting another full hearing of the Land Court which is set down for November—long after reserves of coal will have run out. The objectors have already stated their intention. If the decision does not go in their favour, they will appeal—and so the saga goes on.

During estimates the minister tabled part 1 of the Queensland Coal Mining Board of Inquiry into the Grosvenor Mine tragedy. The minister informed the committee that hearings will resume in the first week of March. However, there is a problem. Recommendation 7 of the report raises concerns as to unintended consequences regarding the introduction of industrial manslaughter into the mining industry. Further to this, the chairman of the inquiry, Mr Terry Martin SC, has written to the minister requesting an amendment to the legislation such that, whilst a witness's right to claim privilege against self-incrimination is maintained, the board has the power to compel witnesses to give evidence to the inquiry, stating that similar powers exist for coroners presiding over inquests.

For that to happen, the minister will need to move these amendments before the House rises this week. If this is not done, the final report of this very important inquiry will be compromised. I have stated that I would not play politics with this inquiry as we want to ensure that the findings of this inquiry are implemented to ensure that this does not happen again. However, if this inquiry is hamstrung by this minister's inaction, all bets are off. The ball is in the minister's court.

I would like to wish policy adviser Mark Neville all the best in his new career and thank him for his hard work and all he has given to this party and to this team.