



Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR TRAEGER**

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## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

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#### **Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

#### **Appropriation Bill**

#### **Economics and Governance Committee, Report**

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (4.15 pm): I rise to speak to the Appropriation Bill. At the outset I have to say that over my time in parliament there has been a decline in the quality of estimates hearings. I am not sure how that works. In the main, when I first got here—despite any other problems I had with the way things were done—I always felt that ministers were sweaty under the collar and left the estimates fairly stressed. I just do not get that same sense now. Government members could turn around and say that is a reflection of the competency of non-government members, but I think that is being a bit unfair.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr KATTER:** I will take that direct criticism, but I try pretty hard to put forward some really important questions to be answered by the government. I really think the government would benefit from giving good answers, whether or not people agree with them, so that people can make a good decision as observers in terms of where they stand regarding the government's position. I think in the long term the government would benefit from that, whether I like the answer or not. Avoiding these questions does not do anyone any good. I am finding it very difficult. No matter how clever I think I am in trying to make my questions concise, it is just getting harder and harder to get a straight answer from the government. Perhaps it is operator error from my end, but I do not think it is. I just make that observation from where I sit. I think the public loses out of that. I do not think in the long term the government will win.

My first question was about the Olympic Games. When I visit small western towns I make a joke, saying, 'Don't worry, you'll get a huge benefit out of the Olympic Games when they come.' People laugh, because they do not see how they will get any benefit out of it. We are happy if the government wants to host the Olympic Games and sees the benefit of doing that, but it is very hard for us to see how that will not dig into other opportunities for us to get hold of resources to develop our areas. We did not get any response from the government on that.

The next question I asked was about royalties in the north-west—a very fundamental question. It is the second or third time I have asked the question, but I have never been given a direct answer. The North West Minerals Province is worth \$3 billion to \$4 billion to the economy. The state Treasury should have a view on whether royalties from that area will increase or decrease. You would hope they

do. I certainly expect that they would. I know that there is a view by some in Treasury that there is no future in the north-west. I know that there are ministers and politicians who disagree with that, but that does not mean Treasury does not think like that. That will impact on decisions being made about proposals such as CopperString. It is an important question to answer. Again, there was no answer on that.

We wanted to hear something on the gas reserve policy. I wanted a response as to whether, with the benefit of hindsight and without casting judgement on anyone at the time who made decisions around this, the government thinks that that was a successful policy. In my view clearly it was not, but we cannot get an answer on that. Again, it would be useful for the public to watch these proceedings to make an informed judgement if the government would say, 'Okay, perhaps on that policy we should change direction,' but you cannot get a straight answer on these things.

The other issue I asked about was around Rex Airlines, and there is a lot of dispute. It is going to tender again and it was brought to my attention that a person from Rex Airlines by the name of Danny Foster was employed to monitor the performance of Rex on that route that it is now tendering for. That was shut down. We could not get a straight answer after asking twice. I used all of my questions up just on that single very specific question and we were told that Danny Foster does not work in that department anymore. I asked, 'Yes, but did he ever work in monitoring that performance?' We never got an answer on that. It is a pretty simple question to ask, so therefore I see a failure in this process.

With regard to police and firearms, no matter which side of the fence you fall on in terms of this issue, it is a big issue. I can guarantee members that there are a lot of angry people out there who just want some fairness in the process and some rigour around the test for a fit and proper person. They want to get rid of all of the subjectivity by, basically, ill qualified people making judgement calls on whether a person is a fit and proper person to maintain a firearm. We just want some straight answers. Instead, the government ends up saying that there has been no problem there at all and there is no increase. That does not help anyone. The government will not be fixing problems if it is not going to answer questions. We might not like the answers, but we have to maintain the integrity of the process.