



Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Furner**

**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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Record of Proceedings, 20 August 2024


**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

**Appropriation Bill**

**Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee, Report**

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (7.39 pm): I rise to reflect on this year's estimates proceedings and the ensuing committee report for my portfolio of agriculture. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the committee chair, the member for Thuringowa, for his work in managing proceedings. I would also like to thank the other members of the committee who participated in the estimates process—the deputy chair, the member for Southport, as well as the members for Barron River, Stretton and Mirani. I would also like to thank the Director-General of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Graeme Bolton, and the entire team for their efforts. They put a lot of effort into estimates. Members get a period of time to scrutinise the good work of the government. That is what we are here to do. The opposition has the right to examine the government through the estimates process. The support of the entire department is greatly valued. I put on record my sincere gratitude for the work they do. In the same vein, I would also like to thank the CEO of QRIDA, Cameron MacMillan, and his team for their participation and support through the estimates process.

To my shock and despite all the significant topics in agriculture the opposition could have inquired about during the estimates process, the member for Gympie went back in time to ask about the QATC Longreach Pastoral College sale. That was a matter that was resolved halfway through 2023 when the tenders were awarded and the property was sold through a thorough process. Members would think that if this matter were so pertinent that it would have been the opposition's first question at estimates last year. Once again, it is groundhog day.

I note the estimates proceedings for the Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee saw 82 per cent of the time committed to non-government questions, which is a good outcome. While I do not have the exact timings for my portfolio, I imagine the time devoted to non-government questions was largely reflective of the whole. This is a prime example of the Miles government's commitment to transparency. This becomes even more apparent when compared with the previous Newman LNP government which held estimates for seven committees on the same day in 2014, making it almost impossible for the opposition and the crossbench to hold them to account.

I note the LNP's statement of reservation makes scurrilous claims of concealment of the estimates process. When it comes to concealment, the LNP really needs to look within. The Leader of the Opposition is refusing to answer questions about his failed business, SET Solutions.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): Minister, I have already made a ruling on what is relevant. It is a very broad scope but it does not include observations about the opposition leader. Please confine your contribution to the appropriations under consideration and the committee report.

**Mr FURNER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I will seek some guidance from you as I am reflecting on the opposition's statement of reservation where they referred to the process as concealment. That is not the matter I am prosecuting today.

Liquidators suspect the Leader of the Opposition made the company trade while insolvent. Concealment is the name of the game of the opposition leader. He did not update his register of interest to include the \$200,000 liability to creditors, either.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister, I have advised you of my ruling on that. I have already made a ruling once for a speaker before you. You are to confine your contribution to the appropriation and this particular committee report. I will let you know that one last time otherwise I will ask you to sit down.

**Mr FURNER:** I thank you for your guidance, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will move to some reflections and comments made by the member Gympie, the shadow minister for my portfolio area. He referenced the National Fire Ant Eradication Program. Today the member for Logan, the member for Inala, the member for Scenic Rim and you, Mr Deputy Speaker, attended an excellent presentation given by an expert from Texas who referenced the fire ant program they have in Texas. It is very different to what we do in Australia. He commended us on our national program. He commended the work he has seen in Queensland around the eradication of this significant pest.

I take on board the comments of the member for Gympie. It shows his lack of knowledge of this program. I would have thought after the two presentations and briefings he has received that he would have an understanding of the program. It would have been a prime opportunity for him to go along to the presentation today and hear how well we are doing in protecting Australians and Queenslanders.

**Mr Zanow** interjected.

**Mr FURNER:** I am not taking the interjection from the member.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Take your seat please, Minister.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members to my left, I did not hear exactly who was responsible for those interjections but they were too loud and the minister is not taking them.

**Mr FURNER:** It would have been beneficial for the member for Ipswich West to come along to the presentation. No wonder he has taken up the program's opportunity to get free bait for the constituents of Ipswich West which Wendy Bourne championed. Well done, Wendy Bourne, for championing that program. I know many other members in this chamber have taken that up.