



Speech By  
**Stephen Andrew**

**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

---

Record of Proceedings, 20 August 2024


**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

**Appropriation Bill**

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

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—Ind) (7.45 pm): I rise to speak to the Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee's report on its consideration of the 2024-25 budget estimates. This year's hearing went from 8.30 am to 8.30 pm. It was a great day. That was not long enough for members, especially crossbench members, to properly examine the large portfolio areas. Members did the best they could. I thank the committee chair and the secretariat. We had a good day.

The committee recommended that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill, for the committee's area of responsibility be agreed to without amendment. I do not oppose this recommendation, but I lodged a statement of reservation, which was tabled with the report. One thing I left out of my statement of reservation and which I would like to mention here is my concern around the government's frequent machinery-of-government changes which added to the difficulties this year. The changes made it hard for members to compare financial performance, detect long-term trends or assess how well each department delivers its programs and services when their areas of operation are constantly changing. All of this serves to greatly reduce transparency and limit the proper scrutiny of government.

Apart from that, I felt that the committee's estimates hearing was very productive. I was particularly happy to hear from the health minister that Rockhampton will soon be getting a PET scanner—something I have lobbied hard for. According to the minister, the department is now looking for an available space to house the scanner and its radiation shielding before commencing onsite training of the staff. It is hoped that the scanner will be up and running as soon as possible, particularly in light of the minister's advice at estimates that 33,000 Queenslanders are diagnosed with cancer every year—a much higher number than in other states. The minister made reference to skin cancers. I have heard from oncologists that the rates of prostate and bowel cancer in Queensland are extraordinarily high. According to the minister, the department's focus on nuclear medicine and a raft of other cancer treatment programs all form part of the government's response to Queensland's unprecedented cancer rate. However, there was no mention of any research studies or funding programs, either at the hearing or in the budget papers, aimed at finding out why so many Queenslanders are now being diagnosed with cancer. This needs to be an absolute priority of any cancer research program going forward, I believe.

Turning to the environment portfolio, I was surprised to learn that the environment department appears to have had almost no involvement in the decision-making process around the Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro project, which I am against. It took only a few questions before it became apparent that the department has done no modelling or studies on the project's environmental impacts, particularly on the area's unique platypus and koala populations or the Eungella honeyeater and gastric frog. The minister and departmental staff seem somewhat confused that I would even expect that this might be something that they should have done. They seemed confused that the industrial sized wind projects that are strung out across my electorate might also call for some kind of environmental assessment to be carried out on them in terms of the impact these giant turbines might have on the region's plentiful, but vulnerable, flora and fauna.

**Mr Zanow** interjected.

**Mr ANDREW:** I take the interjection from the member for Ipswich West. I was told that the department had no involvement whatsoever with any of these projects and I was referred on to the Queensland planning minister. That is an astonishing response from the department that has been absolutely relentless when it comes to chasing down small farmers and commercial fishermen for the slightest environmental infraction they can conjure up. Yet, when it comes to these massive private consortiums, hacking their way through our mountains and state forests and blasting mountain tops, all we hear is crickets. The worms in my front yard are making more noise! What this tells me is that the government is perfectly happy to throw the environment and wildlife under the bus when it suits their political agenda. When it comes to the state's so-called 'green' transition, it certainly does suit their agenda. It is shameful.

That said, I would like to thank the chair and other members of the committee again. Many thanks also go to the hardworking secretariat and the parliamentary staff, who all work extremely hard to ensure our estimates run so smoothly. Again, I will say that there just needs to be more scrutiny. If these renewable projects are so good, let the sunshine in. Let us see all the different contractual agreements: what will it mean for Queensland, what is it going to cost Queensland, when does it stop, are they going to piggy-back on to the infrastructure that they are going to put in place—all those powerlines that will run through the Pioneer Valley? How many other dams are proposed to be built there that will destroy that beautiful valley and all those beautiful animals, all that flora and fauna? It is disgraceful.