



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (11.55 am): Today I want to discuss a number of issues arising from Estimates Committee D. My colleagues the members for Aspley and Coomera will be addressing issues concerning autism mapping, the regional delivery of support services and the failure of the Bligh Labor government to acknowledge grassroots efforts of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

In my statement of reservation I made the observation that the budget papers are not reported from financial year to financial year with any consistency and do not provide sufficiently detailed information to enable proper scrutiny of activities and expenditures undertaken by individual departments. A perfect example of this problem is the Wacol infrastructure redevelopment project, which is part of the implementation of the Carter report recommendations regarding the care of people with disabilities exhibiting challenging behaviours.

As I had done during the 2009-10 estimates hearing, I asked the minister about the Wacol redevelopment project, which occupied a discrete line item in both the 2009-10 and the 2010-11 Capital Statement. The total estimated cost in 2009-10 was \$16 million. In 2010-11 this had declined to \$13.7 million—a clear reduction of approximately 14 per cent. However, the minister denied that this was the case. Ignoring the facts in front of her in black and white, the minister claimed that the difference between the two Capital Statements could be explained by a reallocation of funds and crossover of budget allocations between the Wacol infrastructure redevelopment and the Positive Futures program, which is also a Carter report response program. This issue is a perfect example of the total failure of the Bligh Labor government to report budget allocations between financial years with any consistency or transparency, and this practice undermines confidence in the budget estimates process. I refute the claim by the member for Brisbane Central that we are not taking this process seriously. We are looking to improve this process.

During the estimates committee hearing I raised the concerns and frustrations of local Meals on Wheels organisations, which are struggling to deal with the increased bureaucracy and red tape imposed on them by the Bligh government through the introduction of new, large and complicated service agreements. Meals on Wheels is a community based, volunteer driven organisation that delivers an essential service to many vulnerable people in Queensland, yet volunteers are forced to contend with these new complex regulations. The minister attempted to defend the new service agreements on the basis that some funding had been provided to assist Meals on Wheels providers meet food preparation standards, yet the minister could not point to any widespread complaints about food safety issues from clients of Meals on Wheels to justify these new regulations. Meals on Wheels committees find the new service agreements objectionable and burdensome, and the minister's response to my question during the hearing was unsatisfactory.

Queenslanders are motivated to volunteer their time and effort to groups like Meals on Wheels because they want to help people and strengthen their local communities. The additional red tape is increasing operational costs, and this is a source of frustration for volunteers who prepare and deliver the

meals. The minister made no commitment to reducing the red tape or to providing additional support to providers to deal with the paperwork and regulations imposed by her department.

During the 2009-10 estimates committee hearings my questioning revealed that no key performance indicators existed to gauge the effectiveness of Multicultural Affairs Queensland funded employees in the CAMS and LAMP programs. This year I asked the minister a similar question and was advised that she had asked her department to start taking full reports from the different LAMP and CAMS workers across the state and she thought it would be very important that as minister she should know what they are doing. What a novel idea from the minister that she ought to know what is going on in her department. I do not question the value of or necessity for CAMS and LAMP workers in the community or the delivery of these programs to local communities through local councils. However, there ought to be satisfactory measures applied to all publicly funded programs to ensure appropriate probity and accountability. Such basic measures providing for transparent expenditure should have been in place long ago to engender not only confidence in Multicultural Affairs Queensland but also public confidence in the budget process generally speaking.

I want to thank the Chairman, the member for Brisbane Central, and other members of Estimates Committee D as well as the staff attached to the committee for the cooperative and efficient way the committee operated leading up to and during the proceedings. I certainly do not agree with the statement made earlier by the member for Brisbane Central that the opposition does not take this estimates committee process seriously. We are genuinely seeking out transparent ways of scrutinising the budget papers.