



Speech by

RACHEL NOLAN

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Hansard 20 August 2003

APPROPRIATION BILLS—ESTIMATES COMMITTEE C

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (4.33 p.m.): It is a privilege for me to speak to the process that we went through in Estimates Committee C. The first minister to appear before the committee on the day was the Minister for the Arts, Minister Foley. I want to thank him very much for the initiatives that he presented through the estimates process. But specifically, I want to thank him for the really strong commitment that he has to regional economic development through the arts. Minister Foley has made a huge commitment to my electorate and to many other regional electorates in his capacity as Minister for the Arts and Minister for Employment. He is an extremely regular visitor to Ipswich. As a result of his period as minister, we have seen some really major regional arts developments. Those things have made an enormous difference to the city of Ipswich.

Some years ago we opened Global Arts Link, which is a fabulous regional art gallery and museum in the centre of town. It has been the best rejuvenation project in the centre of town for some years and is playing a key role in the rejuvenation of Ipswich city. Similarly, the railway workshops have brought many tourists to Ipswich. These things have happened because Minister Foley is genuinely committed to regional arts. I thank him very much for that commitment. It is my view that we really are only scratching the surface as to the extent to which arts can play a key role in regenerating a community.

The two per cent public art policy that Minister Foley introduced makes a real difference to the introduction of art in public space and the celebration of our culture in public spaces. I would like to see that happening through private developments, particularly through the Integrated Planning Act. It is my view that, in terms of putting the soul of a community into its public spaces, we are only scratching the surface and there is much more that can be done. But I am sure that that is a view that Minister Foley shares and I thank him very much for his commitment to communities like mine.

Mr Pearce interjected.

Ms NOLAN: I note the support of the member for Fitzroy on that point.

The Minister for Industrial Relations was the second minister to appear before Estimates Committee C. He outlined some of the significant changes that the Beattie government has made to protect vulnerable workers, including casuals and outworkers, and I thank him very much for those changes. They have made a huge difference to the lives of many ordinary Queensland people and on their behalf I express my appreciation.

Minister Bligh spoke at length about education before Estimates Committee C. Her performance was extremely professional. It is great to have a good leading female minister, and she did a tremendous job in the estimates committee process. I found it extremely disappointing to see the gutter attacks on her in recent days emanating from her time as the Families Minister. I find it really quite shocking and appalling to see opposition members who underfunded areas like child protection for decades, if not generations, getting up on their high horses and pretending to take some kind of high moral ground about child protection. I find the hypocrisy of it absolutely mind blowing and I think that it is extremely disappointing to see those kinds of attacks on a minister who really genuinely has put her heart, her soul and the government's money into child protection in recent years. I am sure the community will share my state of being appalled at the hypocrisy of these people.

Having succeeded in child protection, Minister Bligh has made the most significant changes to education that we have seen in Queensland for 30 years. We are in the process of introducing a prep

year. We have the senior school reforms in conjunction with Minister Foley's portfolio and we have recently announced some really significant changes to the middle years of schooling. That will make a huge difference to education, particularly state education, across this state. One of the things that has saddened me is that some years ago—probably 30 years—we saw real social change because the Whitlam government made higher education accessible to all. As a result, a whole generation of working-class people had the opportunity to become professionals. The hope of education transforming people's lives has, to some extent, been lost in recent years and the value of education has been lost to the vulnerable people who perhaps most need it. I believe that these significant changes to education that Minister Bligh is introducing can again inject that hope and that belief in the power of education to all Queenslanders. I commend her for the changes.