



ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCTION

On 21 July 2000, the Legislative Assembly referred proposed expenditures contained in the Appropriation Bill 2000 to estimates committees for examination and report. Organisational units within the portfolios of the following Ministers were allocated to Estimates Committee B —

- Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts
- Minister for Police and Corrective Services
- Minister for Emergency Services.

The committee has considered the proposed expenditure using the various budget documents and written and verbal evidence from the relevant ministers and public officials. The Additional Information folder tabled with the report includes answers to questions asked on notice before the hearing, answers to questions taken on notice at the hearing, documents tabled at the hearing, minutes of committee meetings and the transcript of proceedings of the hearing.

EXAMINATION OF THE PROPOSED EXPENDITURE

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts

Budget Summary

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General will have a Total Controlled Operating Budget of \$269.8m in 2000–01, an increase of \$19.9m over the 1999–2000 Estimated Actual. In addition, the Department will have administered expenses of \$156.1m, which is an increase of \$5.6m compared with the 1999–2000 Estimated Actual. The Department will undertake aggregate capital expenditure of \$43.5m. The State will provide appropriation of \$411m, an increase of 1% on the 1999–2000 appropriation.

The Electoral Commission of Queensland will have a Total Controlled Operating Budget of \$6.3m in

2000–01, a decrease of \$2.2m over the 1999–2000 Estimated Actual. This decrease primarily represents costs related to local government elections in 1999–2000, conducted on a user-charges basis. The 1999–2000 Estimated Actual administered expenses of \$0.5m represents payments resulting from legal action taken in the Supreme Court. The State will provide appropriation of \$6.2m, a decrease of 5.1% on the 1999–2000 appropriation. This decrease primarily reflects carryovers from 1998–99 included in the 1999–2000 appropriation for local government redistributions and boundary reviews.

The Public Trust Office (the Office) will have a Total Controlled Operating Budget of \$41.1m in 2000–01, an increase of \$2.5m over the 1999–2000 Estimated Actual. The Office will undertake aggregate capital expenditure of \$1.1 million. The Office is self-funded through fees and charges for services and from revenue raised through related activities such as property auctions and investment of clients' funds.

Issues raised by committee members at the hearing include:

- revenue raised through training courses run by the Anti-Discrimination Commission and the commission's complaints workload
- new Brisbane Magistrates Court
- budget impacts and funding for the operation of the Office of the Adult Guardian, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Public Trust Office, Supreme Court Library
- alternative dispute resolution
- funding for the drug courts at Beenleigh, Ipswich and Southport
- the meeting of new initiatives in Legal Aid and its budget generally
- budgetary impact on the Electoral Commission of Queensland of proposed changes by the Federal Government to enrolment procedures for Federal elections and funding issues for 2000-01

- future developments of the Justices of the Peace Branch of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General
- the Millennium Arts project and planning of the new Queensland Gallery of Modern Art
- budget impacts and funding for the operation of the State Library, Queensland Museum and Queensland Performing Arts Trust
- commissioning of public art
- impact of the GST on the Queensland Theatre Company
- strategies being used in the Logan district to address real or perceived crime problems
- equity return payments from the Police Service budget
- graduation of police recruits
- value of property assets and cash being proceeds of crime seized by the Crime Commission

Corrective Services:

Minister for Police and Corrective Services

Budget Summary

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) will have a Total Controlled Operating Budget of \$801.3m in 2000–01, an increase of \$46m over the 1999–2000 Estimated Actual. In addition, the Department will have administered expenses of \$4.4m. The Department will undertake aggregate capital expenditure of \$82.5m. The State will provide total appropriation of \$801.6m, an increase of 5.2% on the 1999–2000 appropriation.

The Department of Corrective Services will have a Total Controlled Operating Budget of \$355.8m in 2000–01, an increase of \$35.5m over the 1999–2000 Estimated Actual. The Department will undertake aggregate capital expenditure of \$121.1m. The State will provide appropriation of \$455.8m, an increase of 19.2% on the 1999–2000 appropriation.

Issues raised by committee members at the hearing include:

Queensland Police Service (including the Queensland Crime Commission):

- Glock pistols and Project Lighthouse
- enterprise bargaining agreement with the Queensland Police Service
- funding for the operation of Police Beat and Police Beat shopfront programs and the Statewide implementation of DNA technology
- budgets for the eight regional commands, three commands and four corporate service divisions attached to the police headquarters
- school based police officers
- plant and equipment budget
- information technology initiatives
- State Drug Investigative Group

- capital works budget and equity return for the Department of Corrective Services
- construction of the Maryborough prison
- total prisoner capacity of Queensland’s secure custody centres
- the number of escapes and absconds from Queensland’s custodial centres in 1998-99 and 1999-00
- trial of electronic monitoring of prisoners
- the number of jobs created through the commissioning of new correction centres
- provision of prison labour in work camps in flooded areas
- accountability of the private sector in the management of correctional centres
- Community Service Enforcement and Enhancement Pilot Project and the Court Advisory Service
- staff numbers in community corrections
- tender for the private management of the Borallon prison
- DNA testing of Queensland prisoners

Minister for Emergency Services

Budget Summary

The Department of Emergency Services will have a Total Controlled Operating Budget of \$229.2m in 2000–01, an increase of \$14.3m over the 1999–2000 Estimated Actual. The State will provide appropriation of \$194.7m, an increase of 7.3% on the 1999–2000 appropriation.

The Queensland Ambulance Services (QAS) will have a Total Controlled Operating Budget of \$212.4m in 2000–01, an increase of \$16.8m over the 1999–2000 Estimated Actual. The QAS will undertake aggregate capital expenditure of \$21.9m. The State will provide grant funding of \$121.3m, an increase of 16% on the 1999–2000 grant.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority (QFRA) will have a Total Controlled Operating Budget of \$219.6m in 2000–01, an increase of \$13.4m over the 1999–2000 Estimated Actual. The QFRA will undertake aggregate capital expenditure of \$26.8m. The State will provide grant funding of \$35.6m, which is a decrease of 11.9% on the 1999-2000 grant, following completion of a three year \$7.5m program for capital enhancement in Rural Fire Brigades.

Issues raised by committee members at the hearing include:

- review of the funding of the Department of Emergency Services
- the burden on local authorities throughout the State of providing emergency services
- reallocation of savings made due to periods where positions are unfilled within emergency services
- effect of the GST on the portfolio of the Minister for Emergency Services
- tax deductibility of donations to the QAS
- need for a national disaster mitigation fund to be established by the Commonwealth and the State
- funding to support SES volunteers and plans to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the SES
- budget deficit of the QAS and the number of subscribers to the QAS
- funding to the Queensland Rescue Helicopter Service and the safety standards and practices of community-based helicopter services
- the Fight Fire Fascination Program run by the QFRA
- budget allocation for new fire vehicles for rural fire brigades and the standard and suitability of fire vehicles used by rural fire brigades generally
- the Veterans Ambulance Support Scheme
- the use of satellite communications tracking systems by emergency services agencies

RECOMMENDATION

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as outlined in the Appropriation Bill 2000 for the organisational units in the portfolios referred to it, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The committee thanks the ministers and departmental staff for their cooperation during the estimates process. The committee acknowledges the support and assistance of the staff from Hansard and the committee's secretariat.

Mr Pat Purcell MLA
Chair
August 2000

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mr Pat Purcell MLA (Chair)

Mr Lawrence Springborg MLA (Deputy Chair)

Mr Michael Horan MLA

Mrs Linda Lavarch MLA

Mr Ted Malone MLA

Mrs Jo-Ann Miller MLA

SECRETARIAT

Mr Andrew Timperley (Research Director)

Ms Annette Henery (Executive Assistant)

The transcript from the hearing held on 2 August 2000 is available on the internet via the Hansard site at

www.parliament.qld.gov.au

STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Hansard transcripts from the Estimates Committee hearings outline in detail the concerns raised by the Opposition relating to inadequate budgetary allocations and a continual failure by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice to meet timeframes identified by himself in Program Statements.

It is not the intention of this Statement of Reservations to elaborate on those issues already raised during the hearings. Instead this Statement of Reservations relates to the conduct of the Attorney-General in relation to his preparedness to answer questions during the hearings which directly related to his portfolio.

Director-General's salary bonus:

Despite acknowledging that his own budget was responsible for providing for the Director-General's salary and associated bonuses, the Attorney-General embarked on a deliberate campaign to stymie accountability by refusing to provide details on what bonuses had been paid to the Director-General.

In addition, the Attorney-General failed to outline the amounts paid and the criteria used to determine if a bonus should be paid.

The purpose of the Estimates Committee is to provide an opportunity for the hearings to analyse the adequacy of budgetary allocations. In relation to budgetary allocations for the Director-General, analysis was impossible due to the Attorney-General's contempt for basic democratic processes.

Director-General's vehicle use:

This year marked the second occasion where the employment conditions of the Director-General raised serious ethical questions.

Already the State's Auditor-General has had to make recommendations to tighten and better clarify employment packages of Directors General after last year's hearings revealed questionable conditions of employment relating to travel claims and the hire of furniture for the Director-General's private home.

This year's hearings heard how the Director-General had forgone the use of a private motor vehicle as part of her contract and in its place had accepted a salary boost. However, the Director-General confirmed that she still took a private plated Departmental vehicle home on average four nights per week.

The Attorney-General expressed no concern about the ethics of such an arrangement and it will now be left to the State Opposition to again refer matters surrounding contracts to the State's Auditor-General for clarification.

Freedom of information:

The Attorney-General claimed that "*during this period of our Government*" no Freedom of Information applications had been rejected on the basis of the so-called "deliberative process".

Since the hearings, I have provided the Attorney-General with a list of 16 documents which have been denied my office on the basis of the so-called "deliberative process" and have expressed serious concerns about the Attorney-General's less than forthright comments in relation to FOI.

Lawrence Springborg MLA

Deputy Leader of the Opposition

Shadow Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for Justice

Member for Warwick

DISSENTING REPORT

MINISTER FOR POLICE AND CORRECTIVE SERVICES

POLICE

School Based Policing

Questioning revealed that there has been no increase in school based police officers during 1999/2000 and there is no plan for funding for any increase in this 2000/2001 budget.

Opposition Members of the Committee are extremely concerned that a program of school based police officers, which has proved to be one of the most practical methods of crime prevention, has been virtually abandoned at the levels put in place by the previous government and the flow on into the next budget.

Crime Statistics

With reference to the question in relation to crime statistics, it was pleasing to note that during the period June 1999 to May 2000, there was a 2.6% decrease in total offences against the person. However, Opposition Members of the Committee are extremely concerned that total property offences increased by 7.6%, including a 3.7% increase in unlawful entry and an 8.8% increase in motor vehicle thefts.

Plant and Equipment

The Minister admitted there was a reduction of 12.9% or \$7.6million in the plant and equipment budget for the Queensland Police Service.

He endeavoured to excuse this reduction by saying it was due to one-off expenses (ie Y2K funding) last financial year.

Questioning revealed that one-off expenses in plant and equipment last year were overtaken by greater expenditure in one-off expenses this financial year making that excuse by the Minister invalid.

The concern remains that a police service, which will see 357 additional police officers, has had its plant and expenditure budget cut by 12.9%.

This would be extremely serious if police numbers remained the same. In line with the 357 net increase in police numbers, this cut is extreme.

CORRECTIVE SERVICES

Sexual Offenders' Program

Questioning on the sexual offenders program indicated that there are currently 707 sexual

offenders in corrective services facilities and that 298 of these offenders undertake this program per year.

Maryborough Prison

Questioning revealed that the Maryborough Prison project had been deliberately slowed-down due to a slow down or a reduction in secure custody numbers from 4715 to 4520.

Opposition Members are concerned that the projected 362 increase this year and the supposed increase in prison numbers due to the introduction of DNA testing that the deliberate slow-down due to the Maryborough prison at this stage is due to a shortage of money.

The question remains, if prison numbers do not increase, will the Maryborough prison go ahead?

Prisoner Costs

Questioning revealed that the cost per day per prisoner has risen from \$167-65 to \$184-75.

DNA Testing

Despite the introduction of legislation to allow for DNA testing of prisoners, questioning revealed that the Minister had no plans in place or timetable for testing inmates at correctional centres.

This means that prisoners released before the DNA testing regime is eventually implemented will have escaped any possible detection for crimes other than those for which they were serving time.

Mike Horan MLA

Shadow Minister for Police and Corrective Services