



Estimates Committee E

2004

Report to the Legislative Assembly

Introduction

1. Estimates Committee E was appointed by the Legislative Assembly on 20 May 2004 to examine and report on the proposed expenditures contained in the *Appropriation Bill 2004* and the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2004*. In accordance with the sessional orders adopted by the Assembly, all organisational units within the portfolios of the Minister for Health, Minister for Emergency Services and the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors were allocated to the committee:
2. A public hearing was held on 21 July 2004 to take oral evidence from the Minister for Health, the Minister for Emergency Services and the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors. A verbatim transcript of the committee's hearing can be accessed on the Internet at:
<http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Hansard/>
3. Prior to the public hearing, the committee put questions on notice to each minister. Responses to all the questions were received.
4. The committee has considered the estimates referred to it by examining the various budget documents; answers to pre-hearing questions on notice; oral evidence taken at the hearing; and answers to questions taken on notice at the hearing.
5. Answers to questions on notice and questions taken on notice at the hearing together with minutes of the committee's meetings are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

Minister for Health

6. Queensland Health delivers an extensive range of health services through a network of 202 acute care facilities, 570 non-inpatient services including mental health, oral health, community health and pathology services and 20 State Government residential aged care facilities.
7. The department's strategic intent is to promote a healthier Queensland by maintaining a high quality health system at the same time as prioritising the stewardship role of the health of health of Queenslanders by working with other agencies to maximise the positive health impact of their activities.
8. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2004-05 compared to the previous financial year.

	2003-04 \$'000	2004-05 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	2,669,762	2,964,861
Equity Adjustment	(4,402)	76,490
Administered Items	Nil	Nil
Vote Total	2,665,360	3,041,351

Source: State Budget 2004-05, Minister for Health Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Output Operating Statements

9. The Department of Health estimates it will have a total operating budget in 2004-05 of over \$5.13 billion. The total appropriation provided in the *Appropriation Bill 2004* is \$3.04 billion. The remaining sources of revenue are user charges, commonwealth revenue and other revenue.

10. The Australian Government is a key funding partner for public health services. In 2003-04, the Public Health Outcomes Funding Agreement provided \$23.3 million for a range of public health programs and \$27.4 million for vaccines. The current agreement expired on 30 June 2004 and a new 5 year agreement is being negotiated. The Australian Government has committed to continue to its support of vaccine and public health programs.
11. The estimated expenditure for departmental outputs in 2004-05 compared to estimated actual expenditure for the prior year is detailed in the following table.

Departmental Output	2003-04 Est Actual \$'000	2004-05 Estimate \$'000
Treatment and Management – Acute Inpatient Services	2,403,979	2,586,198
Treatment and Management – Non-Inpatient Services	1,121,928	1,220,678
Integrated Mental Health Services	430,786	460,820
Health Maintenance Services	545,607	592,764
Public Health Services	264,333	271,373
Total	4,766,633	5,131,833

Source: State Budget 2004-05, Minister for Health Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Output Operating Statements

Budget Highlights

12. Budget initiatives will focus on achieving healthier Queenslanders through investment in the provision of high quality services for acute and emergency care, the management of chronic diseases and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.
13. Key priorities for 2004-05 include:
- Easing pressure on public hospitals by allocating \$8.2 million in 2004-05 and \$34.5 million over 3 years, including funds to employ additional emergency department doctors and nurses.

- The establishment of a 24 hour health hotline to provide access to health information and advice about health services.
- Funding four pilot bulk-billing General Practice clinics located near public hospital emergency departments, including two in regional Queensland.
- Enhancing services at the Prince Charles Hospital with an investment of \$77 million in capital funding over three years for redevelopment of the emergency department and the provision of general hospital services.
- Elective surgery waiting lists throughout the state will be targeted including funding to support programs to help patients prepare for elective surgery.
- Support for programs focussed on the prevention of stroke and treatment and rehabilitation of stroke victims.
- Increased funding to support cardiac services and cancer care.
- Additional funding to support skin cancer awareness and specialist dermatology services in regional areas to improve early detection and prevention of skin cancer.
- Early hearing screening for newborn babies, enhanced investigation.
- Establishment of a Birthing Centre at the Gold Coast will be progressed.
- Improved access to high quality renal services including a commitment of \$33.8 million over three years.
- Establishment of mobile dental teams to deliver extra treatments in rural and remote regions.
- Funding of \$7.9 million to support child health and safety initiatives including contribution to an integrated whole-of-government child safety system.
- Commitment of \$4 million to improving access to health services for indigenous people.
- Funding for the purchase of three new aircraft for the Royal Flying Doctor Services over three years to replace those operating from bases in Brisbane, Rockhampton and Townsville.

- Funding of \$5 million to clear the backlog of DNA profiling and crime scene samples at the John Tonge Centre, Queensland Health Pathology and Scientific Services.
- Funding of \$0.12 million to support organ and tissue donation .
- Investing in initiatives to improve staffing capacity to provide services, provide staff with the skills to do their best and support staff with comprehensive clinical data systems.
- Completion of the Queensland Health Skills Development Centre in August 2004 to provide training to clinicians to enhance surgical, anaesthetic and other skills.
- Recruitment of 500 new nursing graduates and 6 additional registrar training positions in locations across the state.

Issues considered by the committee

14. Issues addressed at the hearing include:

- Disposal of hospital waste including clinical waste.
- Hospital waste management procedures.
- Transportation of hospital waste.
- On-site waste treatment plants.
- Specialist service waiting lists.
- Private specialist clinics operating within public hospitals.
- Elective surgery funding and utilisation of private sector providers.
- Early hearing screening for newborn babies.
- Fit for Surgery initiative.
- Redevelopment of the Mater Hospital in South Brisbane.
- Health technology funding.
- Eye and joint replacement surgery.
- Sale of tobacco to minors.
- Fluoridation of domestic water supplies.
- Occupancy rates for Queensland public hospitals.
- Staffing levels.
- Redevelopment of the Prince Charles Hospital.
- Clinical information system being trialled at the Gold Coast Hospital.
- Role of government and non-government organisations in the implementation of the Queensland HIV, hepatitis C and sexual health strategy.
- Public oral health services.
- Purchase and running of the first public hospital PET scanner
- School based youth health nurses.
- Hospital clinics.
- 24-hour health hotline.
- Access to specialist services in remote areas of Queensland.
- Staff safety in public hospitals.
- Treatment and care for HIV-AIDS and Hepatitis C sufferers.
- Community mental health services.
- Statewide cerebral palsy service.
- Refurbishment of the acute mental health facility on the Gold Coast.
- Queensland Health aged care facilities.
- Partnerships between state government nursing homes and private sector aged care providers.
- Medical equipment purchases.
- Elective surgery waiting lists.
- Time frames in emergency departments.
- Renal dialysis unit at the Redland Hospital.
- Stroke and post-operative rehab units.
- Centre for Paediatric Epilepsy.
- Growth Assessment and Action in Early Childhood programs.
- Development of suicide risk detection assessment and management guidelines for the use of non-mental health staff.
- Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme.
- Out-patient services.
- Work force issues including nurse resignations.
- Clearance of backlogs at the John Tonge Centre.

Minister for Emergency Services

15. The Department of Emergency Services is a multi-service community safety agency that directly delivers or funds a range of essential emergency and counter disaster services that focus on preventing or minimising the risk and impact of emergencies and disasters. In addition the department provides a range of essential response and recovery services to assist communities in emergencies and disasters.

16. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2004-05 compared to the previous financial year.

	2003-04 \$'000	2004-05 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	339,354	358,008
Equity Adjustment	6,300	9,879
Administered Items	Nil	Nil
Vote Total	345,654	367,887

Source: State Budget 2004-05, Minister for Emergency Services Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Output Operating Statements

17. The Department of Emergency Services estimates it will have a total operating budget in 2004-05 of over \$658 million. The total appropriation provided in the Appropriation Bill 2004 is \$358 million. The remaining sources of revenue are user charges, grants and other contributions and other revenue.

18. The estimated expenditure for departmental outputs in 2004-05 compared to estimated actual expenditure for the prior year is detailed in the following table.

Departmental Output	2003-04 Est Actual \$'000	2004-05 Estimate \$'000
Ambulance Service	281,833	300,849
Counter Disaster and Rescue Services	50,320	53,808
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service	277,563	303,547
Total	609,716	658,204

Source: State Budget 2004-05, Minister for Emergency Services Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Output Operating Statements

Budget Highlights

19. Budget initiatives will focus on safety and security, including emergency management, counter terrorism preparedness and response services.

20. Key priorities for 2004-05 include:

- Allocating funding to enhance disaster mitigation and management at the state and local levels.
- Enhancing community capacity building programs.
- Funding a range of indigenous initiatives including an ambulance field officers at Cooktown, Doomagee and Mornington Island, development of bridging programs for indigenous people to assist them to qualify as student ambulance officers, maintenance of recruitment targets and completion of the joint Emergency Services facilities on Palm Island and Mornington Island.
- Continue rural training initiative.
- Enhance community safety through the appointment of additional staff to deliver awareness, education and training on specific fire safety related issues.
- Funding to provide for an additional 240 paramedics over 3 years to address growth in demand, maintain emergency response times and improve services to rural, isolated and remote communities.
- Provision of 10 additional fire fighters, a fire aerial appliance and emergency tender services on the Sunshine Coast.
- Funding for the replacement of the Queensland Government Helicopter Rescue Service AS350B/A Squirrel helicopter and the Bell 412 Helicopter fleet.
- Funds to enhance operational readiness, management and response to a broad range of rescue situations and chemical, biological, radiological, incendiary and explosive (CBRIE) incidents.
- Redevelopment of Roma Street and Highfields joint facilities.
- Funding for joint corporate information and communication infrastructure.

- Funding for rural fire brigade training, communications network and research for QFRS (Rural Operations).
- Provision of additional equipment vehicles, training and support for Emergency Services volunteers.
- Establish four new Emergency Service Units in remote and rural communities.

Issues considered by the committee

21. Issues addressed at the hearing include:

- Call out charges for the QFRS.
- Communication centre calls.
- Community ambulance cover.
- Emergency services volunteers.
- Capital works projects.
- Ambulance vehicles.
- The effect of population growth on ambulance services.
- The Roma Street Fire and Ambulance Station.
- Bushfire preparedness.
- Establishment of the national aerial firefighting strategy.
- Casualty rooms at ambulance stations.
- Emergency services response times.
- Paramedic rosters.
- Community safety and education.
- Reputation of Queensland paramedics and other emergency services workers.
- Sale of training courses to China.
- Emergency Services cadet program.
- Service provision to remote and isolated areas.
- Debts associated with the subscription scheme.
- Use of Emergency Services helicopter.
- Draft rural fire code of conduct.
- Level of indemnity provided to Emergency Services volunteers.
- Fire management 1 and 2 training package.
- Terrorism threat preparedness.
- Rural and remote communities workshops.
- Rural fire brigades.
- Government helicopter fleet.

- Disaster mitigation and management.
- Emergency Services training.
- Ambulance availability.
- Fire and Rescue crewing levels.
- First responders program.
- Neighbourhood watch program.
- Budget accommodation inspection process.

Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors

Department of Communities

22. The Department of Communities was formed following the 2004 State election to help address the needs of people to feel empowered, safe and valued regardless of their geographical location or individual circumstances.
23. The department incorporates Community Services, Seniors Interests, Smart Service Queensland, community Engagement and Development and Youth Affairs.
24. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2004-05.

	2004-05 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	245,891
Equity Adjustment	3,474
Administered Items	136,210
Vote Total	385,575

Source: State Budget 2004-05, Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Output Operating Statements

25. The Department of Communities estimates it will have a total operating budget in 2004-05 of over \$290.6 million. The total appropriation provided in the *Appropriation Bill 2004* is \$245.9 million. The remaining sources of revenue are user charges, grants and other contributions and other revenue.

26. The estimated expenditure for departmental outputs in 2004-05 is detailed in the following table.

Departmental Output	2004-05 Estimate \$'000
Prevention Services	58,268
Early Intervention Services	44,931
Immediate Response Services	78,040
Continuing Support Services	79,625
Smart Service Queensland	10,085
Community Engagement and Development	19,656
Total	290,605

Source: State Budget 2004-05, Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Output Operating Statements

Budget Highlights

27. Key priorities for 2004-05 include:

- Provide prevention and early intervention services to strengthen Queenslanders' quality of life.
- Expand Youth Justice Services state-wide.
- Enhance service delivery in youth justice detention centres.
- Expanding public safety initiatives
- Implementing specific CMC recommendations for child safety initiatives.
- Fund additional licensing and monitoring staff to match the significant boost to the number of licensed child care services available to Queensland families.
- Developing links between the department and the Department of Child Safety with a view to ensuring the continuity of support services delivery to children and families.
- Continuation of the e-democracy agenda.
- Improve avenues for regional engagement and coordination.
- Expanding the number of government services available to Queenslanders through Smart Service Queensland.
- Continuing to strengthen the department's partnership with the non-government sector.

Issues considered by the committee

28. Issues addressed at the hearing include:

- Departmental staffing.
- Staff training.
- Youth support co-ordinators.
- Child-care worker training.
- Community engagement improvement strategy.
- Departmental regional boundaries.
- Dual responsibility by the Department of Communities and the Department of Child Safety.
- Brisbane Youth Detention Centre.
- Youth detention centres.
- Prevention and early intervention services.
- Crime prevention programs.
- Information technology systems capabilities.
- Needs of Queensland's ageing population.
- Services for groups affected by stolen wages and victims of abuse in institutions.
- Implementation of the schoolies three-point plan.
- Homelessness on the Gold Coast.
- Places of safety for children.
- User charges.
- Young people participating in government decision making.
- Schoolies festival web-site.
- Contribution of young volunteers.
- Support for victims of domestic and family violence.
- Prevention and early intervention services for indigenous families.
- Emerging needs of Queensland families.
- Art exhibition at Brisbane Youth Detention Centre.
- Regional engagement and co-ordination.
- E-democracy initiatives.
- Seniors Interest Unit activities.

Disability Services Queensland

29. Disability Services Queensland is the department responsible for providing leadership in disability services and programs for people with a disability, their families and carers. The department's key roles include developing policy and strategy; funding acquisitions and allocation; purchasing and procuring services; assessing need; and providing support and services.

30. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2004-05 compared to the previous financial year.

	2003-04 \$'000	2004-05 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	272,693	335,894
Equity Adjustment	17,245	25,692
Administered Items	Nil	Nil
Vote Total	289,938	361,586

Source: State Budget 2004-05, Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Output Operating Statements

31. The estimated expenditure for departmental outputs in 2004-05 compared to estimated actual expenditure for the prior year is detailed in the following table.

Departmental Output	2003-04 Est Actual \$'000	2004-05 Estimate \$'000
Support for Adults	227,800	254,224
Support for Children and Families	133,279	150,551
Support for Community and Infrastructure	29,124	49,964
Total	390,203	454,739

Source: State Budget 2004-05, Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Output Operating Statements

Budget Highlights

32. Budget initiatives provide funding for a range of initiatives that will deliver better outcomes for people with a disability, their families, carers and disability service providers.

33. Key priorities for 2004-05 include:

- Funds to improve viability in the non-government sector.
- Funds for adult lifestyle support
- Funds to support families who care for people with a disability.
- Funds to support young adults with a disability.
- Funds to provide more respite to more families.
- Assist funded services to comply with fire safety legislation.
- Expanding the Local Area Coordination Program and trialing innovative community support services.
- An intensive behavioural support team pilot.
- Alternavite services to hostel care to support people with a disability with high support needs and challenging behaviours.
- Early childhood therapy services.
- Indexation of existing grants to non-government organisations, capital grants to service providers, infrastructure network upgrades and increased operation costs associated with the delivery of disability services.
- New information system and enhancement of service delivery facilities.

Issues considered by the committee

34. Issues addressed at the hearing include:

- Adult Guardian's report into Care Independent Living Association on Bribie Island.
- Rural accommodation support options.
- Autistic specific services.
- Rehabilitation units for people with acquired brain injury.
- New funding commencing in 2004.
- Viability funding for non-government organisations.
- Services for children with a disability.
- Respite and family support services.
- Innovative housing.
- 2004 Paralympic Games.

- Employment services.
- Assets stocktake.
- Support for families who care for people with disabilities.
- Software development.
- Community housing.
- Local area coordination program.
- Early intervention programs.
- Resident support program.
- Young people in nursing homes.
- Deferred or delayed projects.
- Regional office boundaries.

Recommendation

35. The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the *Appropriation Bill 2004* for the organisational units in the portfolios referred to it, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

[Original Signed]

Andrew McNamara MP
Chair
August 2004

Committee Members

Mr Andrew McNamara MP (Chair)
Mr Stuart Copeland MP (Deputy Chair)
Mrs Liz Cunningham MP
Mr Gary Fenlon MP
Dr Bruce Flegg MP
Mr Peter Lawlor MP
Mr Ronan Lee MP

Secretariat

Ms Deborah Jeffrey (Research Director)
Ms Michelle Benham (Executive Assistant)

Statement of Reservation
Estimates Committee E
submitted by
Stuart Copeland MP
Shadow Minister for Health
Member for Cunningham
August 2004

Minister for Health

The process of Estimates Committee hearings in relation to the Ministerial Program Statement for Queensland Health highlights again the weaknesses of the Queensland Estimates Committees system as a mechanism for scrutinizing expenditures by government Departments.

These weaknesses include –

- The limit on the number of Questions on Notice able to be asked as part of the Estimates process.
- The receipt of replies to such Questions on Notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual Committee's public hearing.
- The limited time available for the conduct of hearings for the Department thus limiting the capacity of the Parliament to explore issues of concern to finality.
- The limit on each questioning session generally to 20 minutes thus inhibiting the capacity to pursue issues of interest until finality is reached.
- The use by Ministers and Government Members of questions to provide a basis for propaganda statements rather than genuinely exploring issues relating to Departmental expenditures.
- The failure of Ministerial Program Statements to contain comprehensive, consistent and readily understandable performance standards that are consistently applied on a year by year basis.

In addition to these general comments about the weakness of the Estimates Committee process, the hearings of Estimates Committee E on 21 July 2004 also highlighted the following matters on which responses by the Minister could not be canvassed due to time constraints or the Minister's response was less than satisfactory –

- If honesty and credibility is to be returned to Queensland Health's data collection and the subsequent publication of statistics, the Minister needs to acknowledge the log-jam in relation to specialist consultations which is currently in existence. While I acknowledge that the Minister wants to put a specialist outpatients system in place, there also needs to be official recognition of the negative impact of the previous closures of outpatient clinics. These clinic closures created lengthy waiting times for specialist consultations and treatment and artificially enhanced the published elective surgery figures.
- In relation to Emergency Departments, and the issue of timeliness for treatment, it is well-known that the Emergency Departments of public hospitals throughout the State are encountering significant problems. The government appears to have remedial plan for emergency departments. However, the plan has a three year cycle which does not provide immediate relief for the existing Emergency Department doctors and nurses. The government needs to review the funding provisions to ensure that Emergency Departments throughout the State are fully funded and resourced to meet the demand of emergency patients.

- Unfortunately, the limited time available for the public hearing reduced the opportunity to question the Minister on a number of important health services and resources in particular nursing and medical workforce; mental health services; Aboriginal and Torres Islander health; child health services; oral health; and cancer services.

Minister for Emergency Services

The process of Estimates Committee hearings in relation to the Ministerial Program Statement for the Department of Emergency Services highlights yet again the weaknesses in the operations of Estimates Committees in Queensland as a mechanism for scrutinizing expenditures by government Departments.

These weaknesses include

- The limit on the number of Questions on Notice able to be asked as part of the Estimates process.
- The receipt of replies to such Questions on Notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual hearing meeting of the Committee.
- The limited time available for the conduct of hearings for each Department thus limiting the capacity of the Parliament to explore issues of concern to finality
- The limit on each questioning session generally to 20 minutes thus inhibiting the capacity to pursue issues of interest until finality is reached.
- The use by Ministers and Government Members of questions to provide a basis for propaganda statements rather than genuinely exploring issues relating to Departmental Expenditures.
- The failure of Ministerial Program Statements to contain comprehensive, consistent and readily understandable performance standards that are consistently applied on a year by year basis.
- The Grouping of inappropriate activities in programs and subprograms that inhibit capacity to explore individual activities by government.
- The failure to permit statutorily independent officers and organizations to be directly responsible to and answer questions directly by Members of Parliament thus undermining their independence from Executive government.

In addition to these general comments about the Estimates Committee process, intense questioning by the Member for Hinchinbrook highlighted a number of matters on which the response of the Minister was unsatisfactory during Estimates Committee E:

- The consistent failure of the Minister to be forthcoming regarding the QFRS charging regime for motor vehicle accidents.
- The inability of the Minister to provide details of the total expenditure to date to promote the ambulance levy.
- The misleading tactics utilised by the Minister to explain how the ambulance levy funds where to be utilised.
- The refusal of the Minister to address the concerns contained in the Draft Rural Fire Code of Conduct.
- The failure of the Minister to provide resources and funding, to assist rural fire volunteers to access essential training programs.

Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors

The process of Estimates Committee hearings in relation to the Ministerial Program Statement for the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors highlights yet again the weaknesses in the operations of Estimates Committees in Queensland as a mechanism for scrutinizing expenditures by government Departments.

These weaknesses include –

- The limit on the number of Questions on Notice able to be asked as part of the Estimates process.
- The receipt of replies to such Questions on Notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual hearing meeting of the Committee, and the correction of those responses during the hearing, preventing further scrutiny.
- The limited time available for the conduct of hearings for each Department thus limiting the capacity of the Parliament to explore issues of concern to finality
- The limit on each questioning session generally to 20 minutes thus inhibiting the capacity to pursue issues of interest until finality is reached.
- The use by Ministers and Government Members of questions to provide a basis for propaganda statements rather than genuinely exploring issues relating to Departmental Expenditures.
- The failure of Ministerial Program Statements to contain comprehensive, consistent and readily understandable performance standards that are consistently applied on a year by year basis.
- The Grouping of inappropriate activities in programs and subprograms that inhibit capacity to explore individual activities by government.
- The failure to permit statutorily independent officers and organizations to be directly responsible to and answer questions directly by Members of Parliament thus undermining their independence from Executive government.

In addition to these general comments about the Estimates Committee process the hearings of Estimates Committee E, questioning by the Member for Charters Towers, Member for Burdekin and myself highlighted a number of matters on which the response of the Minister was unsatisfactory:

- The inability of the Minister to provide a guarantee that all Department of Communities staff would be subject to strict ongoing training and professional development programs to ensure that the cultural problems endemic in the Department of Families will not translate into the Department of Communities.
- The inability of the Minister to elaborate on the future processes between the Department of Communities and the Department of Child Safety to ensure that all referrals are actioned accordingly, and not flicked between departments.
- The failure of the Minister to provide adequate access and resources to assist child care workers to comply with the conditions of the Act, and to gain further education and training.
- The failure of the Minister to report effectively on the operations of the Office of Youth Affairs.
- The refusal of the Minister to take advantage of the \$25.5 million dollar seniors concession offer from the Commonwealth Government.
- The Minister's inability to commit to supporting the establishment of autism support services in North Queensland
- The incapacity of the Minister to provide information on the number of people with a disability residing in private accommodation, or the number of complaints regarding these type of placements.

[Original Signed]

Stuart Copeland MP
Member for Cunningham

Statement of Reservation

Estimates Committee E

submitted by

**Liz Cunningham MP
Member for Gladstone**

August 2004

In relation to the hearing by Estimates Committee E and the Department of Emergency Services:-

The issue of the Ambulance Levy has created considerable reaction in communities across Queensland. Almost without exception in my electorate, people have expressed a willingness to support the ambulance service by paying the levy. They have however, objected strenuously to being double, triple (or more) times billed at the same or differing premises.

Much has been said by the Treasurer and the Minister for Emergency Services in relation to their assertion that all monies collected would be expended on additional or improved ambulance staffing; equipment and services.

It was therefore disappointing at best, that the Minister for Emergency Services could not answer my Question on Notice relating to the actual quantum of monies raised; any administration fees charged by the energy companies and/or Treasury; and the amount of funds actually received by the Department of Emergency Services.

This concern was further exacerbated during the hearings when again the Minister showed no interest in determining for his own sake and on behalf of Queenslanders generally, the accuracy of statements made to promote the levy prior to and during its implementation. The Minister merely flicked this issue of accountability on to the Treasurer.

In light of the controversial nature of the charge to Queenslanders and the fact that some residents are significantly disadvantaged by having to pay the levy several times over due to their personal or business interests, most reasonable people would expect that the Minister whose portfolio benefited from that collection was actually interested in being aware of the details in relation to the full amount collected; the on-costs of collection and the final amount available to the Department.

His personal disinterest in these details is concerning.

[Original Signed]

Member for Gladstone.

Statement of Reservation

Estimates Committee E

submitted by

**Bruce Flegg MP
Member for Moggill**

August 2004

Minister for Emergency Services

The Liberal Party fully supports the work undertaken by men and women employed in the various arms of the Emergency Services Department as they consistently place their lives at risk assisting fellow Queenslanders in saving lives and securing property. There is still significant disquiet concerning the fire levy particularly amongst those who are required to pay more than once and in many cases on multiple occasions. The Liberal Party would encourage the Minister to seriously consider a realignment of this policy to ensure the levy is imposed once only on those who are liable to meet it thus restoring a sense of equity across the population.

The population increase across south east Queensland in the last three to four years and the ensuing growth over the next ten years will place significant burden on emergency services. Concerning is the decrease in the Code 1, 10 minute response time from the bench mark of 68%. With an ageing population, attention needs to be directed to ensuring Code 1 response times are at the optimum level. The Liberal Party urges the Minister to ensure programmes are put in place to retrieve this situation thus providing an ongoing and positive service to the people of Queensland.

Of equal concern is the disquiet in the ranks of the North Coast Regional arm of the Queensland Ambulance Service. This disquiet relates to the current roster system with a number of survey forms being completed by officers highlighting those concerns. It is noted the Enterprise Partnership Agreement won't take effect until late 2005 at the earliest and the Minister is urged to address what could well become a serious morale problem within the North Coast Region.

Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors

Communities

This is the first budget for the newly packaged Department of Communities. The Liberal Party is wary that the department will be top heavy in management and not enough funding will seep through to the service delivery level. We also have concerns that while the current staff are undertaking workshops to help them to adjust to the changes and ensure that they have the necessary skills that are required, that they will still be over-worked and underpaid which is a recipe for low moral and burn out.

Homelessness on the Gold Coast

The Gold Coast is in desperate need for an increase in the funding levels for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The Minister has acknowledged that the Gold Coast area has the highest youth homelessness rate in the state and has been identified as the highest need for SAAP yet has refused to allocate any additional funding.

The Liberal Party has grave concerns regarding the lack of crisis accommodation on the Gold Coast and the lack of concern by the State Government. Given the loss of 20 beds for men at Still waters at Southport, Blair Athol Accommodation and Support Program at Bilinga offers the only crisis accommodation for men on the Gold Coast.

Blair Athol provides support services to around 10,000 individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness annually. During the past six months the service has experienced a 40% increase in demand for support and meal services from people who are unable to find accommodation. In the past twelve months Blair Athol has turned away 5002 people. This service has had no additional funding for staff and operations in 10 years and deserves fairer treatment from this government.

The Gold Coast Project for Homeless Youth is facing a deficit of \$113,000 of projected wage costs in the 2004/05 financial year. Reducing staffing levels is not an option as there is an ever increasing clientele of special needs youth which require assistance. If funding levels are not increased they will be forced to reduce their service delivery. This will result in yet more closures and even more homeless young people on the streets of the Gold Coast.

Reparation for former residents of institutions

The Minister has admitted that his department is reasonably limited in relation to former child residents of Queensland Institutions accessing government services. The Minister also stated his department does not, unlike other agencies, provide reparations. This would appear unfair in the light that Aboriginal groups are being offered compensation for stolen wages and there are numerous programs available to people experiencing difficulties today, however those who suffered many years ago have been forgotten.

Disability Services

The Liberal Party is keen to see more funding to reach the service delivery level and the people who rely on these services that assist them in their daily lives.

[Original Signed]

Bruce Flegg MP
Member for Moggill

Dissenting Report
Estimates Committee E
submitted by
Bruce Flegg MP
Member for Moggill
August 2004

Minister for Health

Smoking and Tobacco Products

The Liberal Party is concerned about the high rate of illegal cigarette and tobacco product sales to children under the age of 18. It is clear that the high level of illegal sales has not been matched by detection or prosecution to a level that would have any impact on the illegal activity or discourage rouge traders from selling products to children. The Liberal Party feels that the government should accept that this is a serious problem and put in place a compliance system that is effective and that is rigorous enough to discourage rouge retailers.

Fluoridation

The Minister's comments that there has been sufficient debate on the fluoridation and that it is time to get on with the job are noted. The benefits and safety of water fluoridation is one of the best established facts of modern preventative health. The Liberal Party urges the government to take a leading role in encouraging fluoridation across the state.

Occupancy and Staffing

The Minister's difficulty in answering questions relating to hospital occupancy and staffing levels is noted. The Liberal Party considers that it is basic to the running of the whole system in this state that when Queenslanders require a hospital bed that a bed and staff to treat the patient should be available under all normal operating times.

Competitive Tendering

The Minister's response in relation to competitive tendering for support programmes for HIV/AIDS is acknowledged but the Liberal Party has concerns about the method of application of competitive tendering for such community based health providers. Particularly where significant networks of volunteer support is given to the provider. It is not always possible to built up and close down this sort of system in a fairly short period of time and in many cases they have built up with partial government funding over a lengthy period and we consider these matters should be taken into account in the award of future community health based services.

[Original Signed]

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Member for Moggill