



Speech by

**Jann Stuckey**

**MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN**

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## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE C**

**Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (5.07 pm): I rise to join in the debate on the Appropriation Bill and the report of Estimates Committee C following scrutiny of the appropriation for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Trade—

**Mr O'Brien** interjected.

**Mrs STUCKEY:** I can see that the chair of this committee was quite disappointed not to have my company there.

**Mr O'Brien** interjected.

**Mrs STUCKEY:** As I and my colleagues have mentioned in earlier speeches to estimates committee reports, the current estimates process in Queensland is wanting—as is the member for Cook—in a number of areas. Besides the obvious time-wasting techniques that this Labor government has perfected, numerous respected individuals, as well as media commentators, scoff as they advocate for drastic reform of the estimates process. Included among these respected individuals is the Clerk of the Parliament, Mr Neil Laurie, who described the Premier's changes to the committee system as 'no doubt well intentioned and in the main positive' but with 'serious flaws'. In particular, he says—

The system is still defective in terms of its ability to scrutinise government.

It therefore fascinates me to hear government member after member lavish praise upon and wax lyrical about the current estimates process. My contribution to this debate will focus on aspects of the budget for the portfolio, as I said, of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Trade that relate directly to the Tugun desalination plant in the Currumbin electorate.

In the 2009-10 budget, under the heading of 2008-09 achievements, the Bligh Labor government stated that it had completed construction and commissioning of South-East Queensland water grid projects, including the Western Corridor Recycled Water Project and the Gold Coast desalination plant. During this year's committee hearing it was noted that an additional \$90.7 million was included in the 2010-11 budget to be spent by the Queensland Manufactured Water Authority, known as WaterSecure.

WaterSecure's CEO initially denied that there was any more money to be spent on the desalination plant. However, he later corrected his comments, confirming that the budget was to be split between the government's two manufactured water facilities mentioned above. It transpired that \$30.8 million has been allocated to the desalination plant in this year's budget, bringing it perfectly in line with the government's total expenditure to date being \$911.2 million out of the total estimated cost of \$942 million. In his retraction, the CEO reiterated that these works are not additional funding as they were already in the budget to complete both projects. All very muddling indeed, especially when the government last year was boasting that this project was a *fait accompli*.

The Tugun project has suffered a litany of mistakes and setbacks since commencement. This gentleman's confusion is typical of the poor governance exhibited by this Labor government. The list of

defects and flaws that have required repair in the short time this plant has been operating is phenomenal: sludge and potential cracks in the inlet pipe, corrosion of supposedly non-corrodible stainless steel parts, replacement of inferior quality pipes and so on. Barely a month goes by without another dilemma. Then there is the human factor. It is very disheartening and even depressing for many local residents who have been treated so shabbily by this incompetent Labor government. It is supposedly all within budget, as we continue to hear. Yet despite repeated requests from myself and local media, no breakdown of costings has been made available, highlighting again this government's lack of accountability.

When will Queenslanders finally get to learn the truth about this major infrastructure headache? Countless people, including those with technical experience, have expressed their concerns to me over the last two years as the problems with the plant escalate. Instead of lasting the 50-year time frames that were guaranteed, pipes and holding tanks constructed barely one year ago are already needing to be replaced due to corrosion. Local residents are simply fed up with this plant. Delays, damage to homes, disruption and excuses are all taking a toll on people's lives.

I find it galling for this government and the ministers involved to have claimed that this is an achievement and a completed project in the 2009-10 budget papers. This was an untrue and misleading statement designed to deceive Queenslanders. I am appalled that Labor members here in this House hail this experiment a success. How many other projects of this magnitude and billion dollar price tag has it stated it has completed and commissioned but will not claim ownership and ongoing maintenance because they have ongoing serious defects? I wonder what happened to the Public Works Committee inquiry into the Tugun desalination plant commenced in 2008? I understand it was mothballed. It is time that it came out of those mothballs to let people have a decent look at what this government has managed to completely mess up.