



Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill

Second Reading

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APPROPRIATION (BUDGET VARIATIONS) BILL

Page: 12670

Second Reading

The Hon. M. R. EGAN (Treasurer, Minister for State Development, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [12.24 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The practice of seeking approval for supplementary appropriations to cover payments not provided for in the annual appropriation Act has now become entrenched. This Government, in presenting further appropriation bills, has sought, as far as possible, to allow the Parliament to scrutinise anticipated additional funding requirements prior to expenditures being incurred. Not always is it possible to seek Parliament's authority in advance for pressing expenditure needs. However, Parliament has previously established procedures to provide for this eventuality. Each year Parliament makes an advance available to the Treasurer to meet unforeseen expenditures. In addition, section 22 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983 enables the Governor to approve of payments to cater for the exigencies of the Government, in anticipation of appropriations by Parliament.

By introducing a further appropriation bill in this session, it is possible for the Government to account to the Parliament for how the Advance to the Treasurer has been applied and seek an adjustment of the advance prior to the end of the financial year. It is also possible to seek appropriations to cover expenditures approved under section 22 before year end. The further appropriation bill also seeks additional appropriations to provide for payments which are intended to be made during the remaining period of the current financial year and in respect of which provision was not made in the annual appropriation bill.

In respect of the 2000-2001 financial year the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2001 seeks appropriations of \$168,429,000 in adjustment of the Advance to the Treasurer and \$100,623,000 for services approved by the Governor under section 22 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983. Under the bill, appropriations totalling \$496,138,000 have been sought for additional recurrent services. An appropriation of \$236.5 million is required to enable a further contribution to be made to various rail entities for essential improvements and a range of measures to be introduced, following Justice McInerney's inquiry into rail safety and the establishment of the Office of the Co-ordinator General of Rail.

An amount of \$63.9 million is needed for agencies that had previously been allocated capital works and services funding at budget time and now find that the funding applied for should have been classed as recurrent funding. The additional appropriations required in relation to the First Home Owner Grants Scheme—\$78 million and \$62 million for additional administration costs in relation to the GST—will both ultimately be repaid to the State by the Commonwealth. Based on claims to the middle of February, it became evident that the amount of \$218.5million appropriated in the 2000 budget for the First Home Owner Grants Scheme would require to be supplemented by \$60 million to meet eligible claims to 30 June 2001. On 9 March the Prime Minister announced that the grant to first home buyers purchasing new dwellings would be increased temporarily from \$7,000 to \$14,000, involving a further cost of \$18 million to 30 June 2001.

The Department of Education and Training requires \$43.7 million to assist in financing the teachers' salary increase and \$12 million to fund the teachers' career transition scheme. Until the bill is passed, the moneys required for additional appropriations cannot be spent. If, as has been suggested in another place, the bill is referred to General Purpose Standing Committee No.1, payments will be delayed and the current appropriation for the First Home Owner Grant Scheme will be exhausted by the middle of April. It is essential that the bill be passed in this session. There is nothing to stop General Purpose Standing Committee No. 1 from inquiring into this matter at any time of its choosing, or for that matter to prevent any of the various

standing committees inquiring into these appropriations at the time of the estimates committees to deal with the annual appropriations bill being introduced in Parliament on 29 May.

The bill also seeks appropriations to adjust certain payments made during the 1999-2000 financial year either from that year's Advance to the Treasurer, or approved in that financial year by the Governor under section 22 of the Public Finance and Audit Act. Each of the payments made has been included in the 1999-2000 audited financial statements of the agencies making those payments. The practice of introducing further appropriation bills has enhanced accountability for the expenditure of public moneys from the Consolidated Fund. It is further evidence of the Government's commitment to transparent and full financial reporting to the Parliament and the community. I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. J. F. RYAN [12.30 p.m.]: The Opposition welcomes the entrenchment of the practice of introducing additional appropriation bills during the course of the year—a practice which developed as a result of various reports of the Auditor-General and recommendations and endorsements by General Purpose Standing Committee No. 1, chaired by Mr Deputy-President, Reverend the Hon. F. J. Nile. I have said many times in the past—and this is something I will continue to say—that one of the most powerful things that the Parliament or the Government can do is to spend budget moneys. We spend an enormous amount of time scrutinising legislation, but the most powerful thing that any government can do is spend its budget. Many more things are achieved by doing that than might be achieved through exercising legislative authority.

It is important that we closely scrutinise the decisions of government: first, to ensure that we understand them; second, to ensure that they are the most efficient decisions that can be made; and, third, to ensure that they meet the expectations of the community that we serve. In regard to the technical details of the bill, the Opposition supports this practice and looks forward to it continuing to be part of the role of the Parliament. The Treasurer, in response to comments made by my colleague in another place, suggested, appropriately, that we should refer this bill to a general purpose standing committee for further scrutiny. The Opposition has no desire to hold up the expenditure of government moneys. We endorse the suggestion of the Treasurer: that these matters be referred to any of the general purpose standing committees for further scrutiny.

We will attempt to determine whether it is more efficient to determine these issues immediately or whether we should wait until we consider the budget estimates in June. Although I wish to deal with specific budgetary appropriations, I indicate that other honourable members might wish to pursue issues that might require further scrutiny. Since the introduction of the previous budget we have seen some significant changes to the New South Wales economy. We are no longer witnessing rapid economic growth. Economic growth in New South Wales has declined to about 3.5 per cent, which is still a reasonable level of growth.

Honourable members who have read the budget papers, particularly Budget Paper No. 2, would have discovered that, as growth diminishes, the State's capacity to increase revenues also diminishes. If revenues decrease it may be necessary to make one or two compromises. The Government might not be able to achieve a budget surplus, as it has to date. There might have to be some adjustments to government expenditure, or we might witness an increase in debt. One of the warnings of the Auditor-General in previous reports to this Parliament is that the Government has largely absorbed all the expenditure increases it reaped during a time of unprecedented growth. If it does not make some expenditure adjustments or raise new taxes, contrary to its election promises, it will increase the State's debt, rather than achieve surpluses.

I repeat that warning in this debate. State revenues are heavily dependent upon growth in this State. If the growth picture for the future is not as strong as it has been in the past, adjustments might have to be made. It must be pointed out that since 1995, when this Government came into office, State revenue increased by 53 per cent.

The Hon. R. S. L. Jones: And expenditure?

The Hon. J. F. RYAN: Expenditure increased at almost the same rate. State revenue and expenditure cannot continue to grow. In the last two years stamp duty alone increased the Government's revenue by \$1,000 million—revenue for which it did not budget and which it did not expect to receive. Recently, as part of the marketing exercise that occurred at the weekend, the Premier made his state of the State speech at Penrith. I recall the Treasurer commenting in the media that, in the near future, we could look forward to tax

cuts to business of the order of \$150 million a year. That is a fairly modest return, given the enormous windfall that the Government received in the last two years from stamp duty alone.

If the Government is to receive an additional \$1,000 million from taxation receipts, a \$150 million taxation adjustment is modest, to say the least. I referred earlier to the Premier's state of the State announcement and to the Treasurer's statements at the weekend about capital works adjustments. Those statements, which were a clever marketing exercise by the Government, contained virtually no reference to new capital works. Most of the capital works outlined by the Premier have been part of the forward estimates for some time. All that the Premier did was announce specific projects and allocate specific budgets to them. There was nothing new. Those projects have been announced and reannounced. The Government was doing nothing other than marketing the strategy it had mapped out earlier.

However, there were two significant changes, one of which we welcome but one of which we question. We welcome the Government's announcement that it will upgrade Windsor Road. This Government might be out of office and a new Coalition Government might be in office for four years by the time that project is completed. However, we welcome the announcement because this road work in north-western Sydney is urgently required. Recently the Premier acknowledged on radio that this upgrading was being undertaken largely in direct response to lobbying by the Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member for The Hills and other members in that area. So the Government's announcement represents the success of the Opposition in drawing attention to the problem of Windsor Road.

I said earlier that we question the other change announced by the Premier at the weekend. For some time this Government has been trumpeting the Parramatta to Chatswood rail link. The Premier announced at the weekend that only half of that project will be completed in the foreseeable future. The segment which is to be completed is much needed, but it is not the segment which will link western Sydney to the northern suburbs, which is what was originally intended. Some people might want to see lesser growth in freeways and a decrease in the use of motor vehicles. This important capital works project, probably the most major boost to heavy rail that the city has seen in generations, is to be slowed down and sandbagged. That is not something which the Opposition welcomes at all.

I wish to make some clarifying remarks about specific appropriations in the bill. I note the appropriation to the National Parks and Wildlife Service to upgrade Alpine Way—a project which has been implemented in response to the catastrophic landslide that occurred in the Snowy Mountains with tragic consequences. I welcome the Government's decision to address those issues. Comments were made recently in the media about the inquiry by the Independent Commission Against Corruption to determine whether advice was given to the Government by a whistleblower and whether that whistleblower was subsequently ill treated. Those allegations are serious. The Opposition calls on the Government and the ICAC to ensure that those investigations are thorough and that a full report is made to the Parliament.

It would be of enormous concern to learn that advice might have been given to the Government at an earlier stage that this disaster might occur and that that advice was not heard by the Executive Government but was stymied by the department improperly before it made its way to the Executive Government. Additionally, if legitimate whistleblowers who draw the Government's attention to important issues such as developments in the Snowy Mountains resorts are hounded out of government service, that is very serious indeed and will not be welcomed at all. I make no comment other than to note that the Opposition is watching that inquiry with some interest, and if a full report is not made to Parliament in due course, the Government can expect extra questions and additional attention on this matter from the Opposition.

We note also the appropriation for the Olympic attendance allowance. I understand it results in an additional \$40 million being added to the cost of running the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. The Opposition makes no attempt to quibble with the success of the Olympic Games. They were a wonderful event. The major question that the Opposition has asked in the past, and believes it is appropriate to continue to ask, is whether the Olympics were run as efficiently as they should have been. We note the transparency in the amounts required by each individual department for overtime, and so on, to service the Olympic Games. That is welcomed, but it is necessary for us to scrutinise whether those amounts were necessary and to ensure that the money spent on the Olympic Games was as low as it should have been.

I note that money has been allocated to at least two or three government departments for a Drug Court trial. Some of them are quite modest. The Drug Court trial is something I am sure all honourable members will welcome. Most of the members of the parliamentary committee I chair, the Select Committee on the Increase in Prisoner Population, recently visited the Drug Court and observed how it operates. I commend that exercise to honourable members. The Drug Court is a unique experiment in court procedures. One of the most notable things that members will see is that clients of the Drug Court are expected to return on at least a weekly basis to report to the court that they have had clean urine specimens and have not used illicit drugs. If they are successful in that, the court breaks out in applause. That is not something that happens in an ordinary court.

This court is different because it is a therapeutic model rather than the usual judicial, adversarial model we are used to. I do not think any member who has the opportunity to see the Drug Court in operation will disagree that it is welcome. I would not like to anticipate what the Select Committee on the Increase in Prisoner Population will say about that, but I simply commend a visit to members, and I am sure the court will be only too happy to accommodate honourable members. It is an excellent use of one's time to spend 30 to 50 minutes watching the court. It does not sit each day, so members should contact the court to make sure they attend on a day when clients will be there. I congratulate the psychiatrist, the judges and the parole officers who are making that court work.

One thing I note with this allocation is that the Department of Corrective Services, for example, receives a very modest allocation of \$630,000. That covers, for the most part, the 10 parole officers who operate in that court and who are to be financed from the existing budget of the Department of Corrective Services. In one respect that appears to be a good use of resources, but one of the things that is becoming increasingly clear is that the parole service itself is underresourced. Well and good as the Drug Court is, I would not want to see scarce resources within the Department of Corrective Services that are being well used to keep people out of prison being directed to the Drug Court and see that service not properly used.

It is true that most of the 150-odd clients who attend the Drug Court each week would otherwise be in gaol, and that would result in a direct expense against the custodial budget of the Department of Corrective Services. But the parole service of the Department of Corrective Services should not be robbed to provide services for the Drug Court. If we are going to support the Drug Court, it may be appropriate to make sure it has a proper allocation of resources in addition to what the parole service is able to give to that court.

Honourable members will note on page 18 of the bill an allocation to the project at Kings Cross which the Government refers to as the medically supervised injection centre. I wish to be sensitive with my comments, and honourable members will be aware that I spoke in support of the project and wish it well. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon me to point out that in this bill an amount of \$8.5 million is allocated, possibly to the project. I am not able to work out from the budget papers how much extra that project is costing. For the benefit of honourable members I will read what the bill says. Under "Crown Transactions" it states that \$8.5 million is allocated for:

Capital Grant—Superannuation
Administration Corporation, Insurance for Medically Supervised Injection Centre

I sincerely hope that that \$8.5 million is not being allocated to that single project. I understood that project would involve the expenditure of some additional resources, but not \$8.5 million. The project would not be sustainable with that level of expenditure, but it is possible that some of the other items I read account for the amount and that has been lost by abbreviating the items.

The Hon. M. R. Egan: Where is that allocation?

The Hon. J. F. RYAN: On page 18 of the bill. It is the very first line. Finally, I noticed that the bill allocates additional resources to digital speed cameras. Digital speed cameras are something that motorists are beginning to see crop up like mushrooms throughout the city. The number of motorists who receive fines issued by the Police Service each year equates to a figure in the order of 10 per cent to 15 per cent of all licensed motorists. It is easy to see this is aimed at people who do things that compromise road safety, but we need to question whether it is a proper allocation of resources to fine motorists in more draconian ways, such as these digital speed cameras might do, because we are addressing what could possibly be the

wrong end of the road safety question.

I have inquired about statistics on road accidents over the past four months. It might interest honourable members to know that in November 2000, 48 people were killed on the roads, which is about the same as the previous year, but 15 of those fatalities occurred in the Sydney metropolitan area, which is where most of these digital cameras will be placed. The story is the same for December 2000: 65 people were killed, the highest since 1990, so it represents something of an increase; and of the 65 killed, 19 were in the Sydney metropolitan area. In January 2001, following much comment about the road toll over the Christmas period, 43 people were killed, 15 of them in Sydney. In February 2001, 39 people were killed—a fairly low rate for that time—but, again, of the 39 killed 14 died in Sydney.

If the New South Wales Police Service and the Government believe that increasingly fining motorists in the city by using digital cameras will somehow address the road toll, they are wrong. The problem with the road toll is in country New South Wales. Whether it is inexperienced drivers driving irresponsibly or perhaps at excessive speed, or overtired motorists driving on country roads, we need to ensure that resources are available to address the problem.

The Hon. R. H. Colless: It's city drivers on country roads.

The Hon. J. F. RYAN: Perhaps. People killed on country roads, particularly during holiday periods, tend to be older. It is not even young people being killed on country roads; it is older motorists being killed as a result of either the quality of the roads or their inexperience. My colleague the Hon. R. H. Colless says that it is city people. That is probably true. The number of city drivers in country areas increases during holiday periods. They may not have experience of driving on country roads and they should exercise caution and reduce their speed when they do so.

If we are looking for the next significant attack on the road toll, the answer is more likely to be found by focusing on country New South Wales, not by increasing the use of technology in city areas simply to fine more motorists, because that will create further problems. In places such as Campbelltown and the western suburbs of Sydney people on fairly modest incomes are quickly racking up significant payments to the Government as a result of the efficiency of digital speed cameras. It is no secret that many of these cameras are mounted in areas which appear to be perfectly safe and in which people might travel at 80 in a 60 kilometres per hour zone and so on.

Often motorists are more tempted to exceed the speed limit on a four-lane dual carriageway than on other roads. While I do not commend exceeding the speed limit as an exercise, the facts seem to suggest that it is a less dangerous habit on a dual carriageway than perhaps someone travelling for the first time at 80 kilometres an hour on a single carriageway in the bush during a holiday period. At present numerous motorists are having their licences suspended, and eventually that will result in unregistered people driving on the roads. That is not something I commend, but the Government cannot legislate against obvious human behaviour. It is important at least to exercise caution in enforcing the speed laws, as the police exercise caution in many other areas.

The police do not always issue infringement notices. Sometimes they exercise due caution. One problem with having a machine that simply measures and fines is that machines do not exercise judgement, whereas police officers do. We need to think about that. As we install increasing numbers of efficient machinery to detect infractions on the road we may have to address other impacts of those infringements. As I said, not for one moment am I suggesting that people should drive improperly on the roads. However, I make the commonsense point that efficiently directing increasing resources to fine motorists speeding on dual carriageways in the city will not address the road toll problem, because the problem is in country New South Wales.

We need to address the problem in country New South Wales either by improving country roads or by enhancing the level of enforcement in country New South Wales during holiday periods. As I foreshadowed earlier, the Opposition will not move amendments to the bill or refer the bill to a general purpose standing committee. Nevertheless, we are investigating ways in which the sort of questions I have been asking might be investigated by a general purpose standing committee at a future time.

The Hon. I. COHEN [12.54 p.m.]: On behalf of the Greens I support this bill. I recognise that each year unforeseen expenditures occur which are not provided for in the budget, and that this bill has been introduced to deal with those unforeseen expenditures. While this is not the most satisfactory way to operate, the Greens do not oppose the bill. Looking at the extra expenditures allocated in this bill, there is an appropriate mechanism in the bill to tie up some loose ends from the budget overall. The Greens support the increase in payments for teachers' salaries since the end of the teachers dispute and the payment for various improvements in the operation of the rail system since Justice McInerney's inquiry into rail safety following the Glenbrook tragedy. That is an important focus for budget expenditure at this time.

The Greens understand the need for the Olympics attendance allowance. While we have campaigned strongly against some excesses—and we have been consistent all the way through with Olympics expenditure—I acknowledge that it is necessary to allocate some \$40 million to cover the input of public servants' overtime in servicing the Olympics when there was a shortfall in certain areas. We accept that that is fair both to the public servants who worked overtime and to the smooth running of the Olympics.

The Greens support the allocation of moneys for the Drug Court trials. While the Treasurer may clarify the anomalies regarding the expenditure of \$8.5 million for the medically supervised injecting centre, the Greens have consistently supported funding for such assessments and projects and believe that it is money well spent. With that in mind, the Greens support this bill. In many cases it is well directed and should be allowed to proceed. We understand that at this point the Opposition is not moving towards an inquiry. The Greens do not believe that an inquiry would be appropriate at this time, although it could be appropriate in the future. We are happy with the Government's overall direction in this bill to tidy up some financial loose ends in this State.

The Hon. PATRICIA FORSYTHE [12.57 p.m.]: I shall simply make a couple of observations about the money appropriated for the Department of Education and Training. The Minister said in his second reading speech that about \$43 million of this bill relates to the teachers award increase. It took the Government about 12 months to get that award in place and the award was signed off after the budget last year; therefore, I understand the need for this additional appropriation.

I should like to refer to a discrimination case before the Industrial Relations Commission relating to casual teachers. If the Government thinks that the teachers' salaries issue is finished and signed off once this legislation is in place and we are moving forward, it needs to pause and consider that case. For the benefit of the Treasurer, who is in the Chamber, I highlight that the agreement on teachers' salaries has not solved some of the underlying problems relating to casual teachers. In the recent case, a number of female casual teachers were awarded compensation on the grounds of sexual discrimination. I became aware of this discrimination just before the case went to the Industrial Relations Commission. A teacher on the North Coast sent me an email which stated:

I now find that one aspect of this situation is still very discriminatory. I am a 3 year trained teacher and as such have been put on Step 7 of the salary scale, which is the maximum I have been told I can reach. I thought the new status was to remove barriers for people like us, giving us parity for doing an equal job.

I have been on the maximum 3 year trained scale for almost 9 years, during which I have worked more than 1300 days. If I was a permanent teacher and had worked for this length of time, I would have advanced further than Step 7 by now.

An illustration of this point is that a colleague who is Permanent Part-time for 4 days a week, and on Temporary Status for 1 day per week, is paid at the maximum salary level of \$52,000 for the permanent work and Step 7 of \$40,000 for the one temporary day! The Department of Education obviously views her contribution to her class at 2 entirely different levels and pays her accordingly.

I'm sure her commitment to her class doesn't change so drastically for that one day when she is be so under-valued! Do you agree this situation is ludicrous?

Indeed, it is ludicrous. Further in relation to teachers' salaries, I have just been advised of a permanent casual teacher who received one pay at the beginning of this year—and it was an incorrect amount—but has received no other payment this year. Given that we are now well into March, further payments should have been made. It is therefore clear that there are bugs in the system.

Finally, I wish to make an observation about the career transition scheme, which I did not oppose.

From time to time opportunities should be available for people who feel disgruntled with the system and have lost their enthusiasm. Members might recall that the Government offered \$50,000 to a number of teachers, not for them merely to get out of teaching but, if they were prepared to retrain, to consider entering small business. Firstly, the Government knocked back the applications of many of those who took up that offer. At that time I sought from the Government—but did not receive—an assurance that those people would not be in any way victimised for having put up their hands for that money but had their applications declined.

Secondly, the timing of such an offer was unfair, as it was made so late in the year. It did not give teachers an opportunity to think through their options, or even to apply to get into a university or TAFE course and to further consider their options. If the Government intends to embark on that sort of program again, perhaps it should look at the timing. I ask the Government to indicate, first, whether those people may be victimised for saying that they have had enough and, second, whether those who have taken the \$50,000 and left the teaching profession have been ruled out from returning as casuals, which appears to be double dipping.

[The Deputy-President (Reverend the Hon. F. J. Nile) left the chair at 1.03 p.m. The House resumed at 2.30 p.m.]

The Hon. R. S. L. JONES [2.30 p.m.]: The expenditure referred to in the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill is equivalent to the budget of a small African country.

The Hon. J. H. Jobling: Which one?

The Hon. R. S. L. JONES: Mozambique or Botswana.

The Hon. D. F. Moppett: And you would be very welcome there, too.

The Hon. R. S. L. JONES: If the honourable member used the Google search engine to look up Botswana's gross, national product, he would find that we are debating as variations what that country would spend in an entire year. This bill represents just a little bauble of extra expenditure that has been brought to this House in a great big rush. It is a real luxury to be able to discuss additional expenditure of \$830 million. Incidentally, \$83 million of that expenditure relates to the previous year. Why is it so late?

I ask the Treasurer why the expenditure items have been lumped together. For example, in schedule 1, under "Cabinet Office" there appears "NSW Coal Industry Workers' Compensation Reports, Salinity Strategy" against expenditure of \$351,000. Under "Premier's Department" there appears "Thredbo Inquiry Review, Fairfield Youth Centre, Community Drug Information Strategy" against expenditure of \$1.98 million. Under an entry for the Department of Land and Water Conservation there appears "Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program, Salinity Strategy, Grant—Newcastle Showground and Exhibition Centre Trust, Olympic Attendance Allowance" against expenditure of \$10.832 million. Why can those items not be separated within the bill so that honourable members know exactly how much has been spent on each project?

Earlier in the debate the Hon. J. F. Ryan referred to the Drug Court trial, which is found to under the Attorney General's portfolio. The category is "Glenbrook Rail Accident Inquiry, Drug Court Trial, Other Minor Additional Expenses" against an expenditure of \$5.257 million. Honourable members do not know how much was spent on the Drug Court trial, and that, as honourable members will appreciate, is Government obfuscation. Honourable members have no idea how much money has been spent on individual projects, and that is evident throughout the bill. Under "National Parks And Wildlife Service" there appears "Southern Comprehensive Regional Assessment, Lane Cove National Park, Salinity Strategy, Alpine Way Remediation Works, Bioregional Assessment Study, Olympic Attendance Allowance" against expenditure of \$3.486 million.

The sum expended needs to be broken down into individual projects. No doubt that can be done during estimates hearings, if honourable members want to take the time to do so, or perhaps we could have an inquiry to find out how much was spent on each project. I ask the Treasurer whether, for the next financial year and when the budget variations legislation is next presented, the amounts can be broken down. It would take only one extra page to provide honourable members with the exact amount being spent

on the Drug Court trial, the Blue Mountains Stormwater Run-off Program, the National Parks and Wildlife Service salinity strategy, and all the other projects that are listed throughout the bill. Under the portfolio of the Minister for Information Technology, Minister for Energy, Minister for Forestry, and Minister for Western Sydney, there appears "State Forest Grants" against expenditure of \$6.865 million. How much did that project cost? We have no idea whether it was \$1 million, \$2 million, \$3 million or \$4 million.

Will the Treasurer ask Treasury officials to ensure that honourable members are properly acquainted with the exact expenditure for each area within each portfolio so that they know how much is being spent on the Salinity Strategy, the Meat Processing Industry Restructure Program and the Olympic marketing campaigns, and how much was granted to the Honeysuckle Development and why it is receiving a grant at this point. Honourable members should also know about the Festival Development Corporation grant and the South Sydney Development Corporation grant. What were these grants? What was the money spent on? Again, I suppose honourable members can find out during estimates hearings, or perhaps we should have a separate inquiry after this bill is passed.

There are unanswered questions in this very brief document. This very thin piece of legislation covers \$830 million, which, as I have said, is the annual budget of a small country. To be able to push through expenditure of that magnitude in this fashion after the main budget has been presented is a real luxury, and we may not be able to afford to do that next year. All budgets are predicated on boom times, and we are not experiencing a boom time right now. We will not get \$1 billion from stamp duty this year or next year. We might get \$850 million, if we are lucky.

The Hon. M. R. Egan: Do you want to have a bet? Do you reckon we won't get more than \$1 billion?

The Hon. R. S. L. JONES: It depends on what happens to the economy. The Treasurer knows that right now the economy is practically at a standstill.

The Hon. M. R. Egan: How much would like to bet me?

The Hon. R. S. L. JONES: Mr Deputy-President, the Treasurer wants to bet me on a figure.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. Pezzutti: Point of order: A ruling was made by President Johnson that there is to be no gambling in this Chamber. I ask you, Mr Deputy-President, to rule the Minister's statement out of order and disorderly.

The Hon. M. R. Egan: To the point of order: When the Hon. J. R. Johnson was President I do not recall him giving that ruling. But, if he did, it was only to protect his own operations in the gambling market, so he obviously had a vested interest in it, and I do not think that you, Mr Deputy-President, should uphold that sort of practice.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. Pezzutti: Further to the point of order: In the same year—I think it was in the Forty-Seventh Parliament, the proceedings of which I was reading last evening—there were some seven rulings by President Johnson on the issue of taking bets and gambling in the Chamber.

The Hon. M. R. Egan: In that case, Mr Deputy-President, that obviously proves that our colleague the Hon. J. R. Johnson is leading a double life, because I have sat here in this Chamber when the book of raffle tickets has been sent round by the Hon. J. R. Johnson. Indeed, not only did Labor Party members buy tickets, but National Party members bought tickets as well.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. Pezzutti: If the Minister wishes to reflect upon an honourable member of this Chamber, he should do so by way of substantive motion. If he wants to make a charge against an honourable member, he should do so by way of substantive motion.

The DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. H. S. Tsang): Order! The Treasurer sought to challenge the Hon. R. S. L. Jones rather than make a wager with him. Accordingly, the Treasurer's conduct was in order.

The Hon. R. S. L. JONES: For it to be a bet the other person has to accept it. I do not accept it, so there is no bet.

The Hon. M. R. Egan: Come on!

The Hon. R. S. L. JONES: I will take the Treasurer's money, but I will not accept the bet.

The Hon. M. R. Egan: Five bucks says that we will get more than a billion dollars in stamp duty.

The Hon. R. S. L. JONES: Five dollars! What a mean Treasurer we have here! What about \$500—that is much more like it? I do not wish to break the standing orders of this House by accepting a bet, because I do not bet.

The Hon. M. R. Egan: How many noughts do you want behind it?

The Hon. R. S. L. JONES: The Treasurer will not be able to always rely on a booming economy to enable him to spend an additional \$830 million beyond the budget.

The Hon. M. R. Egan: That is why we have factored in a decrease in stamp duty revenue for the next budget.

The Hon. R. S. L. JONES: That is excellent. How much?

The DEPUTY-PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. R. S. L. Jones should address the Chair and not respond to interjections.

The Hon. R. S. L. JONES: The Treasurer is a very interruptive person, but I will try to avoid his interruptions. My point is that it should not be necessary to have an additional appropriation of in excess of \$830 million half way through the financial year. There should have been some means of being able to predict at least a portion of expenditure worth approximately \$800 million rather than lumping the expenditure into a bill to be rushed through this Parliament. After all, \$800 million is a very significant portion of public expenditure. It is wrong that the various government agencies were not able to predict the amount required.

As honourable members know, \$250 million in additional expenditure resulted from money being spent on rail entities, as it is termed, as a result of various disasters that have occurred in this State. That is reasonable, but the remainder is not reasonable. It is also not reasonable that government agencies are not able to predict expenditure amounting to at least \$600 million after the main budget. This bill represents bad management by Treasury and by the Government because it is a very significant addition to the existing budget.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI [2.40 p.m.]: This slim bill, as the Hon. R. S. L. Jones described it, seeks approval for the appropriation of \$168 million for the Treasurer's Advance, \$100 million for services approved by the Governor under section 22 of the Public Finance and Audit Act, \$236.5 million for a range of measures following the McInerney inquiry, and \$63.9 million for agencies which were previously given capital funding which should have been classed as recurrent funding—and that is typical of this Government. Amounts of \$60 million in relation to the First Home Owner Grants Scheme and \$62 million in relation to administration costs for the GST will be repaid to the State by the Commonwealth.

The amount of \$43.7 million is required for teachers' salaries and \$12 million for the teachers' career transition scheme. The Hon. Patricia Forsythe has dealt with the last, and by far the smallest, amount of money. Those amounts total well over \$1 billion. That will mean that the Treasurer is spending up when he says he will be saving on the windfall he receives as a result of the gross increases in taxes. New South Wales is the highest taxing State in Australia. Every man, woman and child in this State is bearing a higher burden of tax than those in any other State. The Treasurer announced that the Queensland cane toad is taking \$190 million from New South Wales in what he called vertical fiscal imbalance. The amount of \$100 million does not touch the sides.

The Treasurer is wasting money taking out full-page advertisements in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and other newspapers. I accept that \$190 million is a sizeable amount compared with the amount that this Treasurer got over and above what he thought he was going to get. When he brings down his next budget he will say that the end of year surplus last year was in excess of what he thought it would be—a profit of some \$400 million after paying off some debt. The Treasurer will waste public money advertising that Queensland is taking \$190 million from New South Wales in a vertical fiscal imbalance, which is being corrected, of course, with the GST. That is chicken feed when compared with the amounts to be approved today in this bill.

In tough times, when businesses are suffering, why does the Treasurer not reduce business taxes? Why does the Treasurer not give more assistance to the people on the North Coast? Today a briefing was held by Brigadier Phillip McNamara and Robyn Kruk, from the Premier's Department, in regard to the work being done in the post-disaster relief reconstruction of the North Coast, which is being done very professionally. I give credit to the Government for tapping into all of the agencies. Having said that, there is plenty of money to spend on it. The amount of money that is being collected by extra employment in New South Wales in payroll tax alone, and the outrageously high stamp duty collections, must almost cover such an amount of money. These days to buy a family home one has to pay \$15,000 to \$16,000 in stamp duty alone.

The Hon. D. F. Moppett: It has become an absolute scam.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: It is an absolute scam. Stamp duty has to be paid up front. One gets a deposit ready and then has to find another \$15,000 just to pay the Government for the privilege of buying a home. Money has been pouring into State Treasury. Bob Carr said in 1995:

State Labor can credibly go to the electorate with an emphatic commitment, no new taxes and no tax increases.

Since then the Government has introduced a number of new taxes. The *Government Gazette* is the source of my knowledge and concern. Every week it shows increases in court fees, fines or various costs of access. For example, a transcript of a matter heard in the Compensation Court costs \$8.72 per page copied, with a minimum order of \$58. That is an increase. Every six months the Minister for Health comes forward with increases in charges to attend a public hospital as a private patient.

Nick Greiner did away with indexation; that is why it is no longer written into the charges. These things used to happen by stealth, but now every member of Parliament is able to see them in the *Government Gazette*—which, if the Clerk is successful, will be available through Lotus Notes on Friday. Honourable members can read it on the weekend and learn about this Government's increases in fees, fines or charges. Because the old charges are not shown it is difficult to work out whether the amounts are increased by 10 per cent or 5 per cent. IPART deals with fare increases or an increase in the price of electricity, but it does not deal with increases in court fees, fines and so on, which creep up. Their revenue goes to this Treasurer.

The Hon. D. F. Moppett: Like the landlord in *Les Miserables*, a nip here—

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: And a tuck there, you are absolutely right. State revenue has jumped a massive 53 per cent or \$5.2 billion. That indicates how much taxes have been increased since this Government came to office. With that high increase in taxes has gone a high increase in spending. It is good if we can painlessly tax people more and provide better services, but what are the services like? Trains are dirty, they do not run on time, and they crash into things. Ferries crash into things. The health system has crashed. Some 58,000 people are now waiting for elective surgery in this State. The latest figures show that 12,000 have been waiting for surgery for more than 12 months. I commend all honourable members to a document produced by my colleague in the lower House, the honourable Jillian Skinner, who will make an excellent health Minister. She has produced a report entitled "Our Failing Health System—Year 6 Report". This is our sixth year with this Labor Government.

The report clearly shows that Labor promised to reduce waiting lists, which are now at a record level. It promised better hospitals to replace the cockroach-infested, ramshackle hospitals that operate with reduced services, and it promised to upgrade emergency departments. Recently, on a Saturday morning, I attended the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Every bed in the emergency department was occupied, as well as eight cubicles and the plaster room, and more people were waiting. No beds were available in the hospital for people who should have been admitted promptly—away from the emergency department. Instead they were still in cubicles four hours after they were admitted.

The result is that the hospital does not have beds for patients who should be admitted promptly to other than emergency beds, especially if they are so ill that they are still in a cubicle four hours after admission. Many of those patients wait for hours. The Government promised more staff and better conditions, but there are now fewer nurses in the health system. There are more administrative staff, who are

working longer and with reduced resources. Labor promised more operating theatre time, but in fact it has severely restricted operating times. Because of those severe restrictions a record 60,000 people are now waiting for surgery. In 1995, when Labor came to office, 44,707 people were waiting for surgery.

The Hon. D. F. Moppett: The Labor Government promised to cut that waiting list in half.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: Indeed. It also promised to employ more ambulance officers. But ambulance services are failing and are at crisis point. A recent report of the Auditor-General revealed longer response times, more hold-ups and more time spent by ambulances at hospitals. At Gosford hospital it is not uncommon for 13 or 14 ambulance to be parked out the front with patients who cannot be admitted to the emergency department. That is a tragedy. The Central Coast is a classic example of the failure of ambulance services under this Labor Government. The Auditor-General's report mentioned that, although Labor promised better community health, there are now longer waits for podiatry, physiotherapy and dental treatments.

The Minister announced that an estimated 270,000 people in New South Wales are now waiting for dental services. But what did the Minister do? He came up with an increase in funding for dental services of \$4 million—probably part of the advance to the Treasurer. Do honourable members know what that \$4 million bought? It bought a computer system. Now, people who ring up no longer rely on a dental nurse for triage. The nurse asks a series of questions and gives those requiring emergency treatment a time to come to the dental hospital. The nurse might give those who do not need emergency treatment an appointment for assessment. That assessment depends on what the nurse hears over the telephone and what the computer throws up. The computer system then determines whether the appointment for assessment will be in two, three, four or five weeks. Patients, once assessed, have absolutely no indication when they are likely to receive treatment. So for the \$4 million we got an electronic triage system. That computer system has not yet been fully introduced. In fact, no-one has received in-service training in its use.

At the end of the day, all that the Minister will spend next year is about the same amount of money. That sum will be small compared with what he is spending now. I think the figure—which I cannot be sure of—is between \$40 million and \$60 million. Most of that money is spent on the school dental scheme. Is it any wonder that 270,000 New South Wales people are waiting for dental treatment, which is entirely a State responsibility? The Federal Labor Government, under Mr Keating, grasping for votes in the last minutes of the 1993 election, said it would spend \$100 million over three years on dental services. He did that. That allocation was aimed at reducing the waiting times for dental treatment. At that time Mr Keating expected—as is common with many such initiatives—that the State would pick up the funding. That happened in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland, but it has not happened in New South Wales under the current Labor Government.

Then, when we heard the announcement about the \$40 million over four years for dental services, we thought, "This will be a great boost for dental services funding." But it was obviously a case of double counting. That \$40 million was to be allocated in \$10 million grants each year for four years. That is perfectly all right, but deception was involved. At the end of the day, comparing base budgets with base budgets, this State will receive an increase in its dental services budget of about \$10 million or \$11 million. I repeat, that is supposed to treat 273,000 or even more, people. That is just dealing with the health aspect of this budget.

I am not impressed that the budget papers before us do not indicate the precise amount of money that was spent on the Olympic Games. Remember, these were the Olympic Games that were supposed to have been fully paid for. Everything had been budgeted for. Now the Treasurer asks this Parliament to authorise another \$15.5 million for the Olympics. In addition, the Department of Health spent a further \$300,000 to employ extra staff for the Olympics. Throughout these budget papers one finds further expenditures on Olympic-related activity. The Olympic attendance allowance for the health department was \$300,00 over and above what had been previously allocated. The Olympics attendance allowance for the New South Wales Police Service was \$2.528 million.

The budget papers reveal other figures spent on Olympic attendance allowances. For the Minister for the Olympics it is almost \$16 million. Olympic operating expenses for the Minister for Transport and Roads amounted to \$6 million. I will not list the amount for each of the departments. I do not know whether we will ever get a full accounting on the cost of the Olympic Games. There is no explanation why these

amounts of money were needed. These sums are in addition to the last tranche of about \$140 million. The Government asked the lower House to approve that additional expenditure, saying then that would be the last cent that the State would pay, that that would fully pay for the Olympics. Now we are asked to approve a further bill appropriating at least another \$35 million. That tells us how inept our Treasurer is at containing expenses and making sure that adequate resources are made available. He guesses at the amounts.

The Treasurer raises the money to pay for the Games by increasing taxation. There were to be no new taxes, but the Labor Government imposed land taxes on the so-called millionaires in the eastern suburbs. What about the taxes raised by increasing the levy on parking that now extends to Parramatta? He lifted the tax on hotel beds—a new tax introduced despite the Labor Government's promise of no new taxes—as a result of the GST. Of course, the GST is a tax for the States. They do not dare quibble about the GST because that is one tax that will be at a fixed rate: it will rise and decrease in line with the state of the economy.

These appropriations should have been examined thoroughly by a general purpose standing committee of this House. It is outrageous that the Government asks this House to sanction such an additional amount, and to pass the bill without examining the reasons for these additional expenditures. The Labor Government is taking us for granted. It is taking us for a ride. Under Labor, everyone now pays \$2,360 in taxes and charges each and every year. That is an increase of \$721. For a family of four, that is an extra \$2,884 that must be found from the family budget. I have a family of six, so my tax bill is bigger.

But a family of four that does not have the income that I draw from various sources, a family that might have an income as small as \$20,000 or 40,000 a year, certainly regards that increase as a large financial burden. If they got better services for those extra taxes, perhaps they would not mind. But does the Treasurer say that this extra funding will improve the quality of our services and give the benchmarks? All benchmarks for health that I have seen are down, as are the benchmarks for transport. Delays in construction of some of our highways are increasing. The construction date for the Pacific Highway Ballina bypass is now 2008, and the Alstonville bypass is now off the agenda altogether. The Ulmarra bypass, which was meant to have been finished this year, is still being planned.

The Hon. J. R. Johnson: They have had floods.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: It was off the agenda before the floods. When I and members of the shadow cabinet recently visited Grafton the Minister for Roads opened a nice new building which the Roads and Traffic Authority is leasing and at which it has aggregated all its staff. The Pacific Highway display has been moved from the main street of Grafton around to a side street. When I asked officers in the Roads and Traffic Authority about the Ulmarra bypass they said, "We struck a bit of a problem there. It will not be finished in 2001. It will probably be two more years before that bypass is completed." That means that no work is being carried out to duplicate the highway from Grafton to Ballina—a stretch of 130 kilometres.

In 1995 this Government said that, within 10 years, substantial portions of the Pacific Highway would be a dual carriageway. Twice last month I drove 787 kilometres from Lismore to Sydney. Some work is being carried out on that carriageway and, even though my car got dirty from mud, the carriageway is vastly improved. However, that carriageway is a long way short of being a dual carriageway by 2005. The time taken to drive from Lismore to Sydney has been reduced and safety on those dual carriageways has been reduced. Brunswick Heads bypass, which has been of great benefit to people living in that area, is only a one lane carriageway. In the last three months at least seven head-on crashes have occurred on that one-lane bypass, which is meant to be duplicated. It is a recipe for disaster. If a truck turns over on Brunswick Heads bypass a car is likely to crash into it.

The Hon. J. R. Johnson: One lane, one way?

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: It is a one-lane two-way carriageway. The duplication has not yet been completed. The bypass has been opened, which is good for the town. The speed limit has been reduced to 80 kilometres an hour and all sorts of warning signs have been placed along the road, but it has not helped to reduce the number of crashes.

The Hon. D. F. Moppett: All that this Government does is reannounce things that it has already

announced.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: The Hon. D. F. Moppett just reminded me of the announcement made by the Premier at the weekend. How much money has been allocated to country New South Wales?

The Hon. A. B. Kelly: Heaps.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: That is not so. The \$60 million that has been allocated for sewerage is absolute sewage. When the Government introduced the Country Town Water and Sewerage program \$180 million was needed to implement it. All that the Premier did was reannounce a program that was already being implemented. That amount of money was being spent every year. However, that program was cut out and the Government then needed \$180 million to fix up the water and sewerage systems in country towns. It has now implemented a user pays system. That \$60 million will make only a small impact on a problem that was present in 1995.

The Hon. A. B. Kelly: We inherited the problem from you.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: The problem has been inherited for many years. A scheme was in place and \$20 million was being spent every year to implement that scheme. This Government, which has not spent a penny in the past five or six years, has suddenly allocated an amount of \$60 million to correct these problems. The Government announced some time ago that it would implement that program. There was nothing new in the Premier's statement at the weekend.

The Hon. A. B. Kelly: The Government never announced that it was going to spend \$60 million. You have got it wrong.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: A plan was announced in the last budget.

The Hon. A. B. Kelly: Of \$53 million a year.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: Exactly.

The Hon. A. B. Kelly: What was announced on Sunday was an additional \$60 million.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: Over how many years?

The Hon. A. B. Kelly: Over the next four years.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: At the end of that period the Government will have gone halfway towards fixing that backlog. It has been lagging behind. Take the classic example of Byron Bay. The Hon. I. Cohen is aware that no houses will be built in Byron Bay for at least another two years.

The Hon. J. J. Della Bosca: He does not want any houses built in Byron Bay.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: Does the Minister understand that while houses are not being built in Byron Bay—and a number of people want to live there—prices will simply rise? My children will never be able to afford to buy or live in a house or beach house at Byron Bay. People will not be able to afford to buy houses in Byron Bay, which is what happens when governments do not have in place programs for safe and sustainable development.

[Interruption]

I will be interested to establish whether people are not able to afford to buy a house because they are Liberal voters. Labor voters have to pay the same amount of money for housing. Housing has become unaffordable in Sydney. In the near future housing will become unaffordable in western Sydney. Housing is unaffordable in the eastern suburbs, in the city, on the North Shore, the inner west and at Ashfield. If and when a railway line is ever built to the Castle Hill, that area will become grossly unaffordable. Where will Labor voters buy their houses?

The Hon. J. R. Johnson: Get back to the good news.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: I have been searching for the good news. For the information of

the Hon. J. R. Johnson, there is no good news in the Appropriation Bill, and I am speaking to the bill and not to the budget generally. In 1998, the Auditor-General made certain comments which this Government has not taken into account.

The Hon. J. J. Della Bosca: It is a different Auditor-General.

The Hon. Dr B. P. V. PEZZUTTI: The Government replaced the Auditor-General because it did not like his advice. I do not think the present Auditor-General will be different from the previous Auditor-General, who said:

We have seen the Government advising the Governor not to proclaim legislation which the Government opposed, notwithstanding that the legislation has been passed in the Parliament. In this context it is easy to understand why public servants do not consider Parliament's laws to be crucial when those laws conflict with the pragmatic approach of the Government's management and expenditure. The current Government has responded to concerns about unlawful expenditure by introducing proposed retrospective validating legislation.

That is what this legislation is. Two years later we now have this validation. But did the Government come to us with the legislation and say, "We want to increase this amount of money in a prospective way"—the way in which it does with the budget? The Government said, "We have collected all this extra tax and we will spend it how we like. You just have to rubber-stamp it." This Government does not come to us and say, "We will introduce a piece of legislation which will bring in this much money. This is how we will pay for it", and then refer the legislation to a committee. The Australian Democrats have their say every time the Federal Government introduces legislation dealing with industrial relations or other issues, that legislation is then referred to a Senate estimates committee, which explores the costs in detail, and the legislation is either passed or not passed, or amended or not amended.

This Government just spends the money. It does not explain where or why it has spent that money. I refer to the McInerney inquiry, which cost \$236 million, and the Government spent \$478 million on additional recurrent services. I understand that there are wage claims and wage increases, but in the event of such an increase I would have expected the Government to say, "We have increased the amount of money allocated to health this year by \$43 million, \$24 million, \$140 million"—or whatever the figure was—"to cover the cost of increased salaries as a result of the decision of the Industrial Court last week." We would understand that. The Treasurer should be looking into his crystal ball, assessing how much is required, and putting that aside. I am annoyed about what is happening across this State. I am annoyed when I learn where this Government is spending money. This type of additional allocation should be examined by an estimates committee. The Government should be required to account for every dollar of taxpayers' money, which includes my money, that it spends, and all budgetary allocations should be approved by this Parliament. We should not, in retrospect, authorise expenditure of which we may or may not approve.

We should not, in retrospect, be authorising expenditure that we may not approve of at all. In the estimates committees we can examine the budget in detail to find out where the bodies have been buried and where the money has been spent. This arrangement is nothing short of outrageous. I do not approve of spending money in this way. It is not how the Federal Government spends its money. If it did, the people would be more angry.

The Hon. M. I. JONES[3.10 p.m.]: I will not go through department by department complaining about their expenditures, although there is a lot to complain about. In the past the Government has demonstrated prudential management over the State's finances, however that was in the past. At the time of the Olympics the Treasurer requested and was granted a staggering \$140 million. I remember being somewhat astonished that the bean counters in Treasury and the Olympics bodies could underestimate expenditure to the tune of \$140 million. This bill constitutes either mismanagement on a grand scale or a retrospective mini budget. I say mini budget because if the size of this appropriation were put before the House at the time of the next budget, Treasury may have a problem holding next year's budget together or making it appear as it wishes it to appear. The presentation of these figures shows we will face major problems at the time of the next budget, which is only a few weeks away.

I remind the Treasurer and the Government that the value of the Australian dollar is below US50¢ and we still have a considerable amount of debt to be discharged. If we cannot discharge that debt, we will have to service it. Because of the lack of detail in this bill the figures presented are not acceptable. They are not in an acceptable form. We are being asked to approve the expenditure of the best part of a billion

dollars. It probably will be a billion dollars by the time everything is signed off. Questions are raised about the integrity of the Department of the Treasury. It is a case of a very big government with attitude. The coupling of \$1 billion with the \$140 million for the Olympics and deciding to make provision for these unforeseen items makes the exercise somewhat shoddy in accounting terms. New South Wales is the highest-taxing State in Australia. Yes, it has the largest population of all other States in Australia but in percentage terms it is overtaxed. Quite frankly, New South Wales has been let down by Treasury.

The lack of any ability to project and assess future figures is becoming a real problem. Take for example the Parramatta to Chatswood rail link. Coupling the accounting projections for that proposal with the need for this appropriation bill is poor accounting, and that is not acceptable. It would certainly not be acceptable in the private sector. Were a financial controller in the private sector to place a company in the position that this Government has placed New South Wales, heads would roll. The chairman of the company would call for the heads of those responsible and he would receive those heads. However, it is too late. The obligation has been accepted by the Government and the people of New South Wales have to pay the bills. The people of New South Wales deserve better than this. They should have been told in advance.

I note that the allocation for the processing of digital speed camera infringements is \$2 million. How much revenue have such cameras brought in? Why are those infringement processing costs not offset by the amount of revenue raised by the cameras? Such accounting is disreputable. How much money is the Government spending? Hopefully, when the budget is announced we will know. Having regard to the shoddy way this proposal has been put together and brought forward, it seems obvious that the Government is growing like Topsy and its prudential standing, a hallmark of this Government in the past, has been jettisoned. For what reason I do not know. I leave it to honourable members to make their own value judgments.

[Debate interrupted.]

Bill Name: Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill
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[Next Page](#)
[Previous Page](#)