

18 June 2008

## **APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 1) 2008-2009**

### **Consideration in Detail**

**Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (6.49 p.m.)**—I would like to ask a question in relation to community cabinets. I think that the thrust of my question is to ensure that the community cabinet process is being adequately resourced. The reason I ask the question is that I have firsthand experience from the tremendous opportunity that a community cabinet does provide for a local community to engage with government at the very highest levels. In terms of the community cabinet meeting that was—

*Interjection*

*Mr Pyne interjecting—*

*Continue*

**Mr BRADBURY**—The member for Sturt was part of a government that were so out of touch that I can understand that the notion of a community cabinet is so foreign to them—that is why ultimately they ended up introducing Work Choices. But we are determined to ensure that we are not going to be a government that ends up being as out of touch as the former government. That is why I think the community cabinet process is so important.

The reason I am asking the question is that the community cabinet process, in my experience, has gone a long way towards bridging some of the gaps, some of the divide, between those of us that are elected to represent our communities and those people out there looking for a voice to be actively represented in government. I have seen firsthand how empowering it is for local community members to meet, to sit down one-on-one with the Prime Minister or one-on-one with the Deputy Prime Minister or any other member of the cabinet and to raise an issue they have been trying to make penetrate the bureaucratic networks of government for many years, in some cases. I think it is a process that empowers individuals within their local communities. It also shows great respect to local communities, as the cabinet comes into the community and provides local residents with those opportunities.

The reason I am concerned to ensure that this process continues and continues to be adequately resourced is that I think expectations have been lifted. Certainly that is the case in my community, a community that was not listened to all that much by the previous government. Work Choices would never have been introduced had the former government listened to the concerns of people within my community. So I am concerned to ensure that, with those expectations having been raised, there will be adequate follow-through.

A number of issues were raised directly with ministers, a number of issues were raised directly with the Prime Minister and we have already seen some of the evidence of the follow-through. I know in particular that one local resident, Mr Craig Midgely, raised some concerns in relation to the cost of living and the impact it was having on his family. He has a family—his wife and he are looking after four young children—and reflects many of the challenges that local people in my community face. Not only was he listened to on that occasion but subsequent discussions with the Treasurer and the Prime Minister led

to him having an impact on the drafting of the budget, which I think is a great thing—that his particular circumstances were taken into account, as a symbol or a representative of many other families within my electorate.

I note also that Ms Catherine Murray was at the community cabinet and raised some important concerns in relation to carers. Not all that long after the community cabinet meeting, the Prime Minister made some additional announcements in relation to carers. Those announcements went very much to addressing some of the core concerns that were raised with the community cabinet meeting.

As I indicated a little earlier, my real concern is to ensure not only that we are out there allowing people an opportunity to provide consultation and feedback to the government but that there will be an effective mechanism by which these particular concerns can be responded to. As a result of those responses, I believe we will be going a long way towards giving people a greater stake in this democracy and giving them a greater stake in the operations of government. My question to the parliamentary secretary is: in what way is this particular process being resourced, and is it being resourced adequately?