ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

REPORT NO. 1   TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCTION

The Sessional Orders adopted by the Legislative Assembly on 27 August 1999 referred the proposed expenditure contained in the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 1999* to Estimates Committee A for examination and report. The Bill is in accordance with the established practice under which funds for the annual budget of the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service are requested.

The committee considered the estimates referred to it using information contained in the Budget Papers and the Speaker's Portfolio Statement. The committee also conducted a public hearing on Tuesday 5 October 1999 to take evidence from the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Minutes of the committee's meetings are included in a volume of additional information which the committee will table in the Parliament.

OVERVIEW

The Legislative Assembly of Queensland consists of 89 Members who discharge a range of legislative and constituency responsibilities. The Parliamentary Service provides administrative and support services to the Legislative Assembly and administers Members' entitlements pursuant to the Members' Handbooks.

In accordance with Queensland's model of accrual output budgeting, *Managing for Outcomes,* the Legislative Assembly is funded for outputs and not programs as has been the case in prior years. The Parliament delivers a single output called "Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service". The 1999-2000 appropriation is $48.902M which is an increase of 11 per cent over the previous year's budget. The equity return payment to Treasury of $3.967M is included in the appropriation.

KEY INITIATIVES FOR 1999-2000

Improved Use of Emerging Technologies

The Speakers Technology Advisory Group (STAG) examines how emerging technologies can be used to reduce costs such as printing and postage and provide more effective services to Members and their constituents.

The committee notes that $1.3M is provided in the budget estimates for a STAG project to improve Members' access to modern information technologies. This project will replace computer equipment in Members' electorate offices to provide access to the Internet, the Parliamentary Service intranet and provide more reliable e-mail services. Equipment within the Parliamentary Annexe will also be upgraded. Funding under this initiative will also provide Members' parliamentary offices with improved access to the parliamentary video network.

Telecommunication Costs

A review of the management of telecommunication services within the parliamentary precinct will be undertaken with a view to reducing rental, management fees and call costs. The Speaker informed the committee at the hearing that a number of telephones which were not being used had been identified. Removal of these handsets will bring savings of $11,000 to the Parliament.

Improved Use of Human Resources

More effective use of existing staffing resources across and within sub-outputs is planned. Attendants and security resources will be reorganised with a view to reducing

duplication. Administrative support within the Committee Office will also be rationalised with individual committees sharing support staff.

The committee notes the assurance of the Speaker that all Parliamentary Committees will continue to be adequately resourced and that staffing and resource levels will be reviewed as necessary.

The Speaker advised the committee at the hearing that he did not intend to see any permanent jobs lost within the Parliament.

Parliament House Restoration and Refurbishment

Refurbishment of the parliamentary buildings will continue with $2M set aside for the interior of the Parliamentary Annexe. The Speaker advised the committee that the tower levels of the Annexe will be completed by early 2000 and that refurbishment of the committees' area on level 6 and the Library will commence shortly.

The committee notes that a further $0.1M has been allocated in the budget to continue the Parliament House stonework restoration program.

Revenue Generating Activities

A more commercial approach to the provision of hospitality services and other revenue generating activities is being explored. The Speaker advised the committee that these types of activities will continue to be operated by the Parliament and would not be outsourced. A review and update of the pricing and credit policies; marketing arrangements and the scope of Parliamentary educational activities will be undertaken.

RECOMMENDATION

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as stated in the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 1999*, be agreed to without amendment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The committee thanks the Speaker and officers of the Parliamentary Service for their cooperation during the estimates process. The committee acknowledges the support and assistance of the staff from Hansard and the committee's secretariat.

John Mickel MLA

Chairman