



# Estimates Committee A

## 2002

### Report No. 1 To The Legislative Assembly

#### Introduction

1. The sessional orders adopted by the Legislative Assembly on 18 April, 2002 referred the proposed expenditure contained in the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2002* for the Legislative Assembly to Estimates Committee A for examination and report.
2. In accordance with sessional order 31(2), the committee is required to report separately on the proposed expenditures for the Legislative Assembly.
3. The committee conducted a public hearing on 9 July 2002 to take oral evidence from the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. A verbatim transcript of the committee's hearing can be accessed on the Internet at: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Hansard/>
4. Prior to the hearing, the committee put 20 questions on notice to the Speaker. Responses to all the questions were received and these, together with minutes of the committee's meetings, are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.
5. The committee has considered the estimates referred to it by using information contained in the Budget papers, answers to pre-hearing questions on notice and the oral evidence taken at the hearing.

#### Overview

6. The Legislative Assembly of Queensland consists of 89 Members who discharge a range of legislative and constituency responsibilities. The Parliamentary Service provides the administrative and support services.
7. The following table sets out details of the appropriation for 2002-03 compared to the previous financial year.

	2001-02 \$'000	2002-03 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	51,133	54,786
Equity Adjustment	(750)	(113)
<b>Vote Total</b>	<b>50,383</b>	<b>54,673</b>

8. The Parliament delivers a single output called *Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service*. The estimated expenditure for 2002-03 is \$55.664M (2002: \$55.264M)<sup>1</sup> and this will be predominantly funded by the output appropriation. An operating surplus of \$0.300M is projected.

#### Budget Highlights

9. Key elements in the 2002-03 Budget include:
  - a major upgrade/replacement of equipment in electorate offices directed specifically at delivering improved support to Members and constituents
  - introducing a number of management groups to complement the existing management structure to improve internal coordination in addressing agency-wide issues
  - progressing a number of initiatives funded by the Department of Premier and Cabinet designed to improve community awareness of the role of Parliament and improve community involvement in Parliamentary activities. These initiatives include:
    - a regional sitting of Parliament in Townsville to improve community understanding of, and access to, the Parliamentary process

<sup>1</sup> Estimated actual for 2001-02, *Speaker's Portfolio Statements 2002-03:13*

- development of a system for electronic petitioning to complement traditional hard copy petitioning arrangements
  - development of an infrastructure platform to facilitate future broadcasting of Parliamentary sittings via data networks and the internet.
- continuing the Parliament House Stonework Restoration Program (completion expected in 2008)

10. Issues canvassed at the hearing include:

- regional Parliament
- electorate office security
- consultancies and legal advice

Subsequent to the hearing, the Speaker provided supplementary information to his response to a question on notice regarding Crown Law advice for privacy and other standards and the use of parliamentary facilities. Details of this supplementary information is included in the folder of additional information tabled with this report.

- selection and appointment of the new Parliamentary Librarian
- promotion of Queensland wines at Parliamentary functions

The committee is pleased to note that 64 per cent of all wines used at Parliamentary functions is Queensland wine. The Speaker advised the committee that all bottles sold at functions will now carry the label 'Parliament House Queensland Wine Selection'.

- rollout of new printing and photocopying equipment in electorate offices

The Speaker advised that Members will be able to select from a range of copying equipment in order to best meet the needs of their electorate office.

- consultation role of the recently formed Electorate Services Management Group.

- equitable access to Parliament House

The Speaker outlined to the committee the improvements that will be made to the main entrance of Parliament House to ensure equitable public access.

- installation of new software on electorate office computers

Electorate office computers are being replaced with equipment containing the new XP software. Electorate officers and Members will receive training in due course.

## Recommendation

11. The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2002*, be agreed to without amendment.

Margaret Keech MP  
Chair

July 2002

### Committee Members

Ms Margaret Keech MP (Chair)  
Mr Mike Horan MP (Deputy Chair)  
Mr Michael Choi MP  
Mrs Liz Cunningham MP  
Mr Vaughan Johnson MP  
Mr Ronan Lee MP  
Mr Kerry Shine MP

### Secretariat

Ms Leanne Clare (Research Director)  
Ms Deborah Jeffrey (Research Officer)  
Ms Lynn Knowles (Executive Assistant)

# **Dissenting Report**

## **Estimates Committee A – Report No. 1**

**submitted by**

**Mr Mike Horan MP  
Leader of the Opposition  
and Member for Toowoomba South**

**July 2002**

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### **Introduction:**

Parliament is central to our system of democratic government. While it is the job of government to govern, it is the job of the Parliament to act as a check on government, both to extract accountability and to control the quality of government measures. Clearly then, the consent given by Parliament to government measures should be informed consent.

The Queensland Parliament is responsible for a number of functions, one of which is the provision of a forum for the scrutiny of the Executive Government's activities through a variety of parliamentary procedures including Parliamentary Committees. Estimates Committees in particular were established to provide a better means for parliamentary scrutiny of the government's proposed expenditure for each department.

It is critical that Queenslanders have access to transparent and accountable information. Access to this information is the only way to demonstrate that the standard of service meets Queenslanders needs and expectations, and that funding is allocated to areas of priority.

### **The Speaker's Role:**

The Speaker is the chief presiding officer of the Parliament, and enjoys considerable powers within the parliamentary jurisdiction. Administratively, the Speaker has control of the Parliamentary Service and is responsible for the Parliament's policies, budget, services and administration.

The Executive Government is committed to holding Parliament once every term in a regional centre which will have significant financial implications.

On 18 June 2002 the Premier introduced the Parliamentary Service Amendment Bill with the objective to provide for the establishment of parliamentary precincts for the conduct of sittings of the Parliament in locations other than Parliament House, George Street, Brisbane.

According to the Bill's accompanying explanatory note, if sittings are held in locations other than Parliament House, Brisbane it is necessary that the existing powers of the Speaker under the *Parliamentary Service Act 1988* are available to ensure that security and order are able to be lawfully maintained in such locations.

## **Budgetary Responsibility:**

It is imperative that the Speaker's role and powers are recognised to ensure that security and order can be maintained. However, it is a concern that similar recognition of the Speaker's administrative control and responsibility for the Parliament's budget has been overlooked.

Responsibility for the budget and the financial management of the Townsville Parliamentary sitting rests with the Premier. With the Premier holding budgetary control, the Speaker's administrative responsibility for the Parliament is technically undermined. This oversight creates an ambiguous standard, and the separation of powers is fudged as a consequence.

At the public hearing, the Speaker was unable to answer any questions pertaining to the costs of the proposed Townsville sitting. While the Speaker was able to advise that a budget existed in the Premier's Department, the Estimates Committee was unable to access this information to ascertain the level of funding or that the funding was allocated to an area of priority.

The Speaker's loss of control of the budgeting process is unsatisfactory. To uphold respect for the Speaker's role and responsibilities, and to preserve the separation of powers, full financial and budgetary management must be restored to the Speaker as a matter of urgency.

As a result of the Estimates Committee A hearing showing this lack of accountability and loss of control of the Parliamentary budget by the Speaker, I am forced to present this Dissenting Report.

This is clearly a case of politicisation of the Parliament compared with its traditional roll of being managed and controlled by the Speaker.

Mike Horan MP  
Deputy Chairman Estimates Committee A  
Leader of the Opposition and Member for  
Toowoomba South