



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR WARWICK

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL APPROPRIATION BILL

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Estimates Committee B

Report

Mr SPRINGBORG (Warwick—NPA) (3.47 p.m.): I thank the other members of the committee and, in particular, Mr Pat Purcell for his chairing of the committee. I think he did an excellent job. He kept the committee very much on the straight and narrow. I did not put in a dissenting report for Estimates Committee B in relation to the portfolio of Justice and Attorney-General. However, there are a couple of matters about which I have some concern. They are issues that I raised in the Estimates committee with the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and matters that I would also like to raise in this Assembly today.

Those matters extend to my concerns over the abolition of the Inquiry Legal Representation Office, the issue of the Brisbane Magistrates Court, legislation for the coming year and the requirement—either now or in the future—of additional magistrates or District Court judges. I acknowledge that there is an additional Justice of the Court of Appeal, which is very important. However, the bulk of the trial work—both criminal and civil—is done in our Magistrates and District Courts. I believe we need to forward plan a little more for this area. When I questioned the Attorney-General on this, he indicated that although there is always a demand in that sector, nothing had been planned for now or in the future. That concerns me a little. We indicated that we would like to see an additional District Court judge placed in Toowoomba. That cannot be done if it does not appear in the Budget papers.

On the matter of the new Brisbane Magistrates Court at Queensland Place, I say to members of this Parliament that that is very much overdue. The former coalition Government had allocated \$2m in its Budget for planning work and identification work, and that was carried through by the Attorney-General. It is all right for the Attorney-General to sit opposite and pooh-pooh the matter, but I am trying to be constructive and identify some of the issues that are of concern. I know that getting \$114m from the Attorney-General's colleague the Treasurer is not an easy issue. The same goes with Treasury in general. However, we cannot just say, "No, we are not going to get the money. We have the money to do the planning, but we are going to have to worry about the construction at some later time." If getting the \$114m in funding for it is the big problem, then let us look at other ways of doing it. As I indicated to the Attorney-General during the Estimates committee hearing, let us involve the private sector. If we cannot find the \$114m to construct this building and the private sector can, we might be able to buy it back or lease it back off them over a period.

The Attorney-General knows as well as I do that there is a problem with this building. The accommodation is inadequate. Since the late 1970s it has been used as the Magistrates Court, but it was never purpose built for that use. It is not a very secure place and it is not a place that is conducive to a good working environment for our magistrates.

On the issue of ILRO, previously I have expressed my concern on the record about the Government not continuing with the Inquiry Legal Representation Office. During the Estimates committee, I pursued the Attorney-General on this matter. He indicated that he believes that that

function can be fulfilled in a more cost-effective and better way, maybe through legal aid or through other avenues. We talked about ILRO costing \$1m last year, but that it might not cost that amount this coming year. However, we did not really receive a proper definition of the future costs for legal aid or whoever doing this work. That was my concern. It is all right to say that ILRO was costing \$1m, but maybe by spending that \$1m we saved \$1.5m or \$2m. I was trying to get cost projections as to how much was going to be saved by doing things the way in which the Attorney-General was going to do them.

I was pleased to see the additional funding for legal aid, which was very important. It was a matter that the former coalition Government recognised as well in its May Budget. Another important issue was the increased money for victims of crime. However, I believe that we need to continue to pursue our Commonwealth colleagues with regard to their liabilities and obligations in areas of the law.

Time expired.
