



Speech by

Dr DAVID WATSON

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

Estimates Committee A

Report No. 1

Dr WATSON (Moggill—LP) (Leader of the Liberal Party) (12 p.m.): I take pleasure in entering today's debate on the parliamentary appropriations. As members know, I have been always a very strong supporter of the Estimates committee process. In fact, I spoke on this issue quite a number of years ago, even before the Estimates committee process came into being.

I join my colleagues in thanking the staff at Parliament House for the excellent work that they are doing. With the previous member, I congratulate staff for the work that is being done in the technology area. My electorate is fortunate that the electorate office has received new computers. Although there are a few teething problems, I am sure that over the next few years I and every other member will benefit from the introduction of the new computer system and access to the Internet.

It is also fair to say that the staff and members are starting to work under increasing pressures this financial year compared to the previous couple of years. Members on this side of the Chamber report to me that they are becoming more frustrated with the amount of money that has been allocated to committees and, of course, the work that is being demanded of various committee staff.

One can see that the Parliament is facing some pressure. The departmental financial summary on page 3 of the Speakers Portfolio Statements makes it quite clear that if one adjusts payments for outputs of \$47,652,000 by the amount that the Parliament is getting for its equity return, which is \$3,967,000, in terms of real money for outputs the Parliament has actually lost \$484,000. While I understand that the responsibility falls on the Speaker and he has to manage within those resources, the fact of the matter is that the Government has allocated \$500,000 less to the Parliament. It is not clear to me that that is consistent with the Government's previous rhetoric about maintaining accountability of the Executive and ensuring that the Parliament has the proper support to carry out its functions.

In mentioning the equity return, the Speaker got it right when he answered one of my questions by saying that the concept of equity return does not have any real meaning in terms of this Parliament, because the options that may be available in departments are simply not available to the Parliament. There is simply no way that we can "more efficiently use" the building. For example, we cannot sell Parliament House. That is simply not an option that is available. It is not an option to move somewhere else. It is not only that this is an historic building, but there simply has to be a place for the Parliament to meet and this is the place that it is going to be. There may be some options at the periphery.

Mr Speaker: Maybe in the future there will be options to purchase.

Dr WATSON: There may be some options, but in a realistic sense we are not going to move from the current Parliament House for a whole lot of in-built, historical reasons. In terms of equity return, there is not an incentive for the management of the Parliament that means anything. The sooner that is done away with, at least in terms of the Parliament, the more sensible it will be.

More importantly, I also raised with the Speaker the fact that we are not even measuring the real efficiency of the Parliament and we are not measuring the impact of the inefficiencies within the bureaucracy of Executive Government on the Parliament. The perfect example is the introduction of Bills. Already this year, in fact in the last few months, we have seen Bills being introduced and rushed

through the Parliament—for example, the cleaning up of the net bet affair and, of course, the privatisation of the TAB. Those kinds of things do have an impact on the Parliament, but they are outside the Parliament's control. They are in the hands of the Executive. Perhaps we ought to think about some way of not only giving an incentive to the Parliament for being efficient but also penalising the inefficiency associated with the Executive when it impinges on the Parliament in that way. It would be possible to measure those things in the future and we should think about that.
