



Speech by
**Mr DENVER
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MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY

Hansard 27 October 1999

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

Estimates Committee A

Report No. 1

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (12.10 p.m.): I rise to speak in the debate on the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill, because I am concerned about a number of allocations to this area. The Government has squeezed some half a million dollars out of the Parliament, despite the fact that it has a Budget deficit of \$1,235m. That will enable the Government to fund other activities. We are certainly bearing the brunt of that. Reference has already been made to some of the cutbacks. For example, the telephones have disappeared from some areas. I have taken to carrying my mobile phone, because I invariably end up in some sector of the precinct where there are no phones and someone needs to contact me urgently. We have to do that now because the phones have disappeared.

Reference has also been made to the staffing of parliamentary committees. It is disappointing to see that, after the encouragement that this Chamber has given to those committees, this year some cutbacks will be felt by the staff of those committees. The activities undertaken by parliamentary committees have expanded. In recent years they have worked relatively well, after having been introduced in early 1989. Certainly, they are also feeling the effects of the squeeze on Parliament House.

The Government has a Budget deficit. Nevertheless, it still seems to have insufficient funds to spend on its own activities. The Parliament is having to bear some of the brunt of its cutbacks. For example, laptop computers and computers in our electorate offices have been mentioned. I was fortunate enough to have been given a laptop on a trial basis. That trial was going extremely well. The previous speaker mentioned the fact that the information technology available in the general public sector and in the private sector leaves our technology back at the starting post; there is no comparison. Businesspeople and most of my constituents find it unbelievable that we do not have either laptop computers or other up-to-date and cutting edge technology in our electorate offices. They find it incredible that we only recently got access to email. There is much that we still need. For example, people tell me, "Just download it off the Internet." I have to say, "Hang on. I'll see whether someone at Parliament House can find it on the Internet."

The high-rise lifts have been mentioned previously. I am concerned that the lifts may be unsafe. A number of incidents have occurred recently. They have a tendency to slip when one gets into them, particularly if there are more than a couple of people in the lift. In addition, members and staff have been stranded in those lifts for considerable periods. The lifts are experiencing a lot of wear and tear as a result of the construction work in the Parliamentary Annexe. Careful attention needs to be paid to maintaining those lifts. I am, as I am sure other honourable members are, concerned about how safe it is to use those lifts.

Mr Borbidge: They must be the only lifts in Brisbane where one follows the other up and down.

Mr BEANLAND: They probably are. As another member mentioned, I find that a 10 to 15 minute wait is not unusual—and even then both lifts arrive at once.

I wish to refer to the staff. I congratulate the staff, who are operating under increasing budgetary pressures, regardless of which section they are in, be it the Parliamentary Library, Hansard,

Administration, Security and so on. This year I have spoken in this place about the Education and Protocol area. We are seeing increasing pressures on the staff across-the-board. I think we will find that workplace relations in this place, which were already suffering severe strains, will come even more to the fore in the time to come. The issue is not only one of job security; it is also about the way in which staff operate and perceive they are being treated and the way in which things happen in this place. Over the next 12 months, they will be under more and more pressure, because the Government needs to find extra money. As I said, there has already been a cutback of half a million dollars. Generally, I did not notice similar cutbacks in a number of departments at which I have looked.

Mr Borbidge: Certainly not in the Premier's Department, which has a 41% increase.

Mr BEANLAND: Certainly not in the Premier's Department. Yet we still have a Budget deficit of \$1,235m.

Time expired.
