



Speech by

Mr DOUG SLACK

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL
Estimates Committee A
Report No. 1

Mr SLACK (Burnett—NPA) (11.50 a.m.): I also support the remarks that have been made by previous speakers in relation to the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill. Obviously, many of the points that I was going to make have been made, but I will reinforce them. At the beginning, I would like to support the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and thank the chairman and the other Government members of Estimates Committee A for their cooperation. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Speaker for the forthright way in which he answered the questions that were addressed to him during the hearing.

In his submission, the Speaker made the point that Parliament has a budget of \$49m. In that regard, it is not just the running of the House in respect of the parliamentary sittings that demands the time of the Speaker but also when one considers that the Parliament has a budget of \$49m, one realises that the Speaker has to run a very large and very demanding business. It involves a responsibility for the continual maintenance of the facilities as well as staffing. In relation to the upgrading of the offices and the bedrooms, I support the comments made by the member for Warwick in that it is not five-star accommodation, but it is very adequate accommodation. It is no Taj Mahal: it is modest and it serves our needs well. I compliment the Speaker on continuing the program that the previous Government had in place to upgrade the facilities at the House and the Annexe, which is so necessary not just for the precinct but also for the members.

I also join my colleagues in complimenting the staff. During my stay in the Annexe, I have never had any reason to criticise the staff, and I say that sincerely. They have always been courteous, they have always been friendly and I found them to be efficient. The member for Warwick referred to the various sections of the staff and the jobs that they do. I add my personal thanks for the work that the staff do. In saying that, I express my appreciation for the assurances that were given by the Speaker in relation to job security for the staff. As members would appreciate, when efficiency modes are in train, there is some nervousness on the part of members of the staff in terms of their job security. In terms of the service that they provide, I do not believe that they deserve that. I am sure that is not the intention of the Speaker and that he is addressing these issues in the fairest way he can.

I would like to take this opportunity to refer to the role that the Parliament plays, particularly in relation to school visits, and thank the officers for that. Quite a few people connected with the schools in my electorate visit the Parliament. During my terms in office, I have received good comments back from them in appreciation of the services and the recognition that they have received. They viewed their visit to Parliament in a very important way and regard it as a highlight of their visit to the capital. I say the "capital" because those people have travelled from the Burnett area.

It is very important that we maintain the facilities of the Parliament not only for school visits but also for visits by members of the general public and overseas visitors. Earlier, it was mentioned that we had somebody from Colorado here. I pay tribute to the role that the Speaker plays in hosting many of those visits, because that is very important for the pride that we have in this particular precinct within our State and in marketing it. It is extremely important that we maintain those services and those facilities

that, as I have said earlier, are not Taj Mahal but are modest and adequate. It is also extremely important that we encourage more visitors to visit the precinct to appreciate what is part of our heritage.

As I said, the Parliament is a large business and, obviously, it is very demanding. I join with the member for Warwick in saying that the only complaint we have is with the lifts. I appreciate that the reality is that we do not meet that often and the demand is only for a short period of the year. I say to many members—and I say this to myself, because quite often I lack the discipline—that we should use the stairs more often, particularly when we are on the lower floors, not only for our own health but also to relieve some of the strain on the lifts. I believe that, when one looks at the costs to upgrade the lifts, one would realise that, in comparison with other demands, it is unrealistic to provide additional lift services. However, we need to provide sufficient funding to ensure that the lifts are well maintained and that they are up to speed to service the demands that we place on them. As well, many of us should pay more attention to the fact that we should walk between floors a little more often.
