



Speech by

KAREN STRUTHERS

MEMBER FOR ARCHERFIELD

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

Estimates Committee A

Report No. 1

Ms STRUTHERS (Archerfield—ALP) (11.55 a.m.): In supporting the Estimates Committee A report, I would like to commend both the responsible fiscal management of the Queensland Parliament under the stewardship of the Speaker, the Honourable Ray Hollis, and the innovations from which we are all receiving benefits. I want to focus particularly on the outcomes of the Speakers Technology Advisory Group—STAG. All members will now be entering the new millennium with the technological tools appropriate for this era. For a while I thought that we were going to be like the Clampetts of Beverly Hills—old fashioned and left behind with outdated systems—but having the Internet in particular is a great innovation and well received by all of us. I also want to take the opportunity to commend the information technology staff of the Parliament for their support to members and their staff. I think that my staff have particularly stretched the friendship with the help desk staff a little. However, despite our regular calls for help, we receive ever-willing support.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my electorate staff, Wendy Turner and Michael White. They have done a tremendous job over the past year dealing with some of the new computer systems and innovations. I also want to thank Aurora Senior, our Level 12 administration officer. She has been very patient and diligent in the face of unrelenting demands.

The committee system of this Parliament provides a very important avenue for public accountability. The committee research and support staff continue to perform at a high standard, and I pay tribute to all of them. I am aware that some of our committee budgets have been adjusted downwards slightly in the name of fiscal responsibility. Although I accept the need for this, I am keen to ensure that the parliamentary committee that I am involved in, the PCJC, continues to receive adequate levels of research and administrative support.

I also want to take this opportunity to put in a plug for possible future expenditure on a couple of matters that have not been covered in the past or have not been raised in the past. One of those comes from students at St Pius X school in Salisbury in my electorate, who used their initiative and sent me a petition seeking the inclusion of a student room at Parliament House. They thoroughly enjoyed their parliamentary tour. As I think other members have said, the tours that are offered are a great feature of our Parliament. The students went away, they thought about it more, and sent me a letter and a petition saying that they would really like to extend that learning experience by having some sort of dedicated room or unit for them. I do not have all the details on what they are proposing, but I would certainly be happy to follow that up with them. I have encouraged them to provide more detail, and I will pass that on to the Speaker.

I also support the calls that have been made from other members for additional lifts. I accept that the demand is only at certain periods during the year. However, having been stranded in one of the lifts for 30 minutes this year with some of my parliamentary colleagues, I can say that, although it was not a bad experience—we sat back and relaxed, had a few laughs and enjoyed the show—I am not sure that everyone would be as courageous as we were. At times, the lifts are inefficient and unreliable. If it is possible—and I know that it would be a great expense—additional lifts would be very

much appreciated. In support of accountability, I suggest a transparent lift on the outside of the building in Alice Street so that the public can actually see what we are up to.

Finally, during the short time that I have been in the Parliament, I have been impressed by the outstanding service provided by all parliamentary staff—the attendants, the security staff and the catering staff.

The parliamentary precinct runs efficiently and well, and I think that that is a great credit to the whole team. I share the view of the member for Bundaberg, although I am not as disciplined as she or others might be. I have certainly been putting on a bit of weight while I have been here. I cannot blame the parliamentary staff for that, but I pay credit to the wonderful food that they provide. I will be doing more exercise. I will be getting into that gym this year. We have great facilities and it is important that we all use them.
