



Speech by

**Hon. RAY HOLLIS**

**MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE**

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Hansard 27 May 1999

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

**Estimates Committee A**

**Report No. 1**

**Mr SPEAKER** (12.25 p.m.): I firstly thank members who have taken part in this debate. In the main they have been very complimentary about what is happening in the Parliament. There are two issues here. We do have an 11% increase in the parliamentary budget. We do have also, as the Leader of the Liberal Party said, some squeezing of that budget as it affects the actual subprograms of the Parliament. As Speaker, I am responsible for the expenditure of taxpayers' money by the Parliamentary Service. We as a Parliament have the same responsibility as every other agency of government, which is to increase efficiencies and to use the money that we are budgeted in the correct manner.

The framing of the budget, of course, was very different this year. It was an accrual budget and it brought some matters home to subprogram managers; I had talks with every one of them about its framing. It is interesting how people begin to recognise they are not dealing with their own money when they get involved in their own budgets; it is the taxpayers' money.

I was interested to hear the member for Burleigh talk about the fact that the budgets for committees are being cut. In that respect one could say that they have less money than what they asked for. However, if honourable members look at the budgets for the committees over the past three years, they will see that the money that each committee has received is almost identical to what they have spent in each of those three years.

The other thing is that we have to reprioritise the moneys which were lying dormant because under accrual accounting we cannot have the situation that happened in the past where a lot of money is given to various areas but is not spent and then, at the end of the period, that money is shuffled around to address another issue. With accrual accounting we have to actually program budgets for outputs. When that is done, of course, every subprogram manager has the responsibility to look at exactly what his agency is going to spend and what they are going to budget for.

On the issue of committee budgets, I have already promised Neil Laurie, the clerk of committees, that if a problem with the committee budgets arises halfway through the year, we are quite happy to go back and look at those budgets and adjust them accordingly. The fact does remain that the amount of money allocated in this budget equals the amount of money spent in each of the last three years.

Quite rightly when we reprioritise, we have to look at what the Parliamentary Service is all about. It is all about serving the Parliament and the parliamentarians. The idea of reprioritising some of that money was so that we can provide from the State program some increased information technology services to members' offices. We have heard in this place for years and years that we are far behind the eight ball. In fact, we are even further behind than primary school children in the provision of IT services.

When I looked at this budget, I thought: we cannot stay where we are; we have to go forward. That is exactly why the STAG team was formed. And I must pay my compliments to all the STAG

members for the work they have put in to see what as a committee we could do to give as much as we could to members. I think we have achieved something. As the member for Chermside said, we have actually made progress in relation to email. It used to be that every time the fax machine started, the email dropped out. We have fixed that problem. We are actually moving forward. I think that is the important part.

As to the refurbishment of the House, last year we did more than we set out to do in the previous year's budget. We did levels 21 and 22 as well. This year, we will do 19 and 20. For the workplace health and safety of the committee staff, we will work also on the committee area on level 6. We will be refurbishing the Library. Many things are going forward. We have done that in the context of a budget that is tight. The budget for the whole of Queensland is tight. We should not be spared any more than any other agency. We have to work within what we get from Treasury. I thank the staff of the Parliament for the way they have come together and said, "We can do our bit to balance this budget." It is good news for us as a Parliament that we have a staff that is willing to look at efficiencies and ways in which we can balance the budget and still provide increased support for members.

I am aware that I am running out of time. The gift shop is now refurbished in the foyer of the Old House. I hope that people will look at the gift shop and purchase their Christmas gifts there. Some time this week the Catering Manager, Jaakko Ponsi, will be putting out a brochure for your Christmas gifts. I urge all members to consider that. An important aspect of this place is that we cannot just spend; we also need revenues. As Speaker, I will be looking to increase those revenues over the next year.

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