



Speech by

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard 27 October 1999

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

Estimates Committee A

Report No. 1

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.31 a.m.): In speaking to Estimates Committee A relating to the Legislative Assembly, I would firstly, on behalf of the non-Government members of the committee, take this opportunity to thank the Government members of the committee. Despite differences of attitude, more relating to the departments of State than the Parliament, I think we worked well together, and the cooperation across the Parliament was as it should be when an Estimates committee is operating properly.

I want to raise a couple of issues. Firstly, I know that we did receive certain assurances in regard to the removal of telephones from certain areas around the building. We accepted the assurances of Mr Speaker that this was a sensible cost-cutting exercise. I was concerned to find last night, when people were trying to contact me, that apparently the telephones that were formerly available to members in the Members' Dining Room have been removed. Obviously, that is something that I would like the Speaker to have a look at, because obviously some people do seek to make urgent contact with members during meal times. I think it is important, as we go through that cost-cutting exercise, that telephone services to members are not withdrawn from those sensible places where, clearly, those particular facilities should be made available.

I also want to say that I am very pleased that the Parliament House restoration and refurbishment program is continuing. The restoration or the refurbishment of the Parliamentary Annexe began during the term of the previous coalition Government. I make the observation that the state that the previous Goss Labor Government had allowed the Parliamentary Annexe to deteriorate into was a disgrace. The building was close to falling down. There was torn carpet, and there were bits missing from walls. And despite the best efforts of the maintenance team, it is clear that, through the six years of the Goss Labor Government, they did not care; it was not a priority. Considering that members have to live and work in the Parliamentary Annexe—as well, of course, as a great many staff—the state of the Parliamentary Annexe was an absolute, unmitigated disgrace. I commend the current Government for following through on the maintenance programs that were put in place during the period of the coalition administration, and we look forward to seeing the work on the Parliamentary Annexe completed in the not-too-distant future.

I think that everyone expects facilities for members to be efficient. I do not believe that the refurbishment is over the top. I think it is sensible. It has been carried out well. And I think that we owe it to ourselves and our staff and to the people of Queensland to make sure that the refurbishment program is such that it is responsible but also allows people to do their jobs.

Mr Speaker gave commitments to the Parliament in regard to the parliamentary committees system. The Speaker indicated to the Estimates committee that there had been some review of staffing arrangements as far as parliamentary committees are concerned and that he would continue to monitor the situation. I think it is important that this situation be watched very, very closely because the parliamentary system that we have, which is a good system—a robust system—came about as a result of the reforms recommended by Fitzgerald. It was implemented to a certain extent—to a large

extent—during the period of the Goss administration, although a couple of the major committees came on line, I think, during the Cooper administration in the late eighties.

The parliamentary committees system was expanded and resources added to during the period of the coalition Government. In fact, I will stand by the comment that the previous coalition Government provided a degree of resources to the parliamentary committees system in this State that is unrivalled—that we had never had before. And I am very, very sensitive to any suggestion that, through cutbacks or any pressure from the Executive or for other reasons through Treasury—because we know that Treasury does not like parliamentary committees—we find the resources being cut back in any way.

This Appropriation Bill is all about the supremacy of Parliament, and it is absolutely essential that those parliamentary committees be properly maintained. If they are not, I give notice that there will be hell to pay.
