



Speech by  
**Mr TERRY SULLIVAN**  
MEMBER FOR CHERMSIDE

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Hansard 27 October 1999

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

**Mr SULLIVAN** (ChermSIDE—ALP) (12.05 p.m.): Firstly, I thank and congratulate the Parliament House staff who have looked after the members. As Government Whip, it is not uncommon for Government members, particularly the newer members, to ask me questions about facilities or procedures to do with their work. I have always found the staff at Parliament House only too willing to help me to pass on information or to help the member directly. I thank them for that.

The refurbishment of the tower block in particular has been well received and needed. I pay tribute to the former Speaker and the current Speaker for the work that they have done. I hope that the media treats this in some reasonable form. I have been disappointed with its continuing presentation of the accommodation here as five-star accommodation. Many within the media would know what five-star accommodation is; many members of this Parliament would not.

The difficulties of maintaining the old building give rise to budgetary problems. The beautiful stonework, timbers and finishings of the building are magnificent and stand as a tribute to those who have gone before us. They also mean that an extra burden is placed on the budget that the Speaker has to manage to maintain the building. I congratulate the Speaker for the ongoing restoration of the stonework and for maintaining the beauty of this building. I also pay tribute to him for opening Parliament seven days a week, so that people can tour the building. I hope that we can market Parliament House within the tourism sector better, so that more people will come through the building on weekends.

I have been privileged to be a member of STAG, the Speaker's Technology Advisory Group. I appreciate the start that the Speaker has taken to drag people like myself, if not kicking and screaming, at least with some force into the computer age. I thank the Speaker for enabling me to communicate with my children in a sphere that was not possible before. When we are dealing with computers, to have one of my teenage children say, "I didn't know that. That's good, Dad", does a fair bit for this middle-aged father's ego.

I am somewhat disappointed that the full amount needed to implement the information technology program was not made available through Treasury. As we look at other Public Service areas and private enterprise, it is very obvious that the workstations and computer facilities provided to members of Parliament certainly fall below the standard of those provided within the other two sectors. Friends of mine who work in the private sector are amazed when they see the facilities at our electorate offices and other facilities that are made available to members. They are surprised that things that they take for granted in their businesses are not made available to us. However, that has shown the public of Queensland that the members of Parliament have taken part in some belt-tightening, because we have not got what was asked for. We have had to tighten our belts. I am sure that the Ministers, in a spirit of solidarity with the backbenchers, have also had to tighten their financial belts with respect to their offices. We have all shared some pain in not getting what we wanted from the Budget.

I very strongly encourage the Treasurer and the Budget Review Committee to ensure that next year the full amount is available to introduce to all electorate offices, in conjunction with the laptop program, a proper IT system. Until the full system is in place, we cannot use the available technology. A drastic upgrade of the email system was required. It was absolutely appalling that electorate officers could spend 45 minutes trying to retrieve messages that were sent from Parliament House and from other members, and in some cases still fail to retrieve them. I thank the Speaker for the first stage of the upgrade and I encourage him to press for the continuation of the work that is needed elsewhere.

I also have some concerns about the staffing of parliamentary committees. As a member of the parliamentary Travelsafe Committee, I have seen how the recommendations of former committees have led to changes in legislation and practice that have saved the lives of Queenslanders. We now have the lowest road toll in years. We could not have done that without the support of the research director, the assistant director and the administration staff. If we have to share those people, we will not be able to conduct as many inquiries and we will not be able to put recommendations to the relevant Ministers. I have serious concerns about that. I ask the Speaker and the Treasurer to reconsider the staffing allocation. Some honourable members have mentioned the lifts. This issue is not just about inconvenience. I am concerned that we could lose Government simply because of the failure of our lifts.

Time expired.

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