



Speech by

Hon. RAY HOLLIS

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

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APPROPRIATION [PARLIAMENT] BILL, ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

Mr SPEAKER (5.57 p.m.): There are far too many speakers to be able to respond to them all today, but I would like to open by saying that the door to the Speaker's office is always open. I do not think that it has been closed in the two and a half years that I have been Speaker. I am amazed when I hear some of the complaints such as those made by the member for Callide as to what a terrible time he is having when not once has he approached me with that complaint.

It is very easy to complain about the video on demand system and to blame me for that. But the STAG group was also aware of what was going on with the video on demand system. We are not experts in that sort of installation and we do not expect to be. We take some advice from the people who are experts. I appreciate that there are problems, and I do not deny that. But members should not forget that the real issue here is that the system that was in place previously was 20 years old, had had no improvements in that time and was in danger of breaking down. All that we had done was take sets from place to place and tried to repair them as we went along. It was a system that would have broken down in a very short time.

In relation to the budget of the Parliament, some remarks were made about budget cuts. In the 1998-99 budget we had an increase of 11%. Part of that increase was so that we could have the Internet and the intranet in our offices for the first time. I thank STAG. It is a bipartisan committee and it is a committee that does the very best it can for members. I think that having the Internet and the intranet in our offices in January this year—and I heard the member for Ashgrove talk about how valuable that is in reducing the amount of hard copy we need in our offices—has been a great step forward for the Parliament. STAG will continue to look at issues where we can assist members, because that is what it is all about. It is not about improving things in here; it is about improving the services to members. If sometimes something is not quite as it should be, we will make sure we fix it. But the main aim is to do these things, to make sure that members have available to them the technology that is available everywhere in the Public Service, schools, etc.

The issue of laptops was raised again today. Most people realise that, with Budget restraints as they are, we have to operate in an efficient manner. Even though there is only a 2% increase, this year's Budget has a \$491,000 surplus. That is what we are budgeting for. That money will go to members' requirements in order to change the computers in two years' time and to do all those things we need to do to upgrade services to members. This year STAG will also look at printing machines for offices in order to get away from photocopiers that break down all the time. We are trying to do things which will improve services. There will be problems. Things will go wrong, because technology is like that. When the member says that we should return to the old days, does he want to go back to a horse and buggy instead of driving his car? That is what he is saying. We have to look at where we are going and how we are going to do it.

The other issue that has been raised today relates to the lifts. This morning I said that I am just as concerned about this issue as everybody else. I have called for briefings on the lifts. Those opposite should not forget who built the Annexe. There were the same number of members when the Annexe was built as there are now, so there were the same problems.

Mr Springborg: It was a design fault.

Mr SPEAKER: That is right. The same problems existed when this place was built. I have the briefing in relation to the lifts, and there are a couple of points worth noting with regard to this situation. I am advised that, over the past few years, the tower lift controls have been completely upgraded to a standard equal to modern lifts. The number of actual faults recorded with these lifts is deemed to be acceptable in terms of lift usage. The most common complaint is that the tower lifts are slow. Usage logs indicate that, during parliamentary sessions, these two lifts are two of the busiest lifts in the CBD, recording very high call rates. Whilst it would be nice to have more lifts, of course it is not very practical to build them on an existing building. It is very difficult.

Yesterday I mentioned the number of people in the lifts, and it was mentioned again today. The Australian Standard for the number of people in a lift is 23 people at 68 kilograms. One would not find too many 68-kilogram members in this Chamber. That is the difficulty. I have suggested that we reduce the number to accord to an average weight. That is something we may have to do. However, the lifts are already there and we will try to do what we can to fix the problem. I also wish to announce that, in opening the Parliament, we are opening the Alice Street members' door, which has not been opened since 1979. We will open that tomorrow morning for members' access by swipe card. And the gates opposite the tunnel will also be open very shortly.

Time expired.
