



Speech by
Mr TERRY SULLIVAN
MEMBER FOR CHERMSIDE

Hansard 23 August 2000

APPROPRIATION [PARLIAMENT] BILL, ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

Mr SULLIVAN (ChermSIDE—ALP) (5.36 p.m.): In supporting the motion before the Committee, I thank the Speaker for his role in providing services for us, for our constituents and for those who visit this parliamentary precinct. The Parliament is not an institution or a building just for us, the members; it is, rightly, the people's House. As I have gone around this complex with many community groups, visitors and schoolchildren, the emphasis on this place as the people's House is very evident. If this building was used by 89 parliamentarians on only 60 sitting days a year, then the money that is spent on it would be wasted. On the other hand, if the money spent on this building and on the support services means that this place represents democracy, it is a place for the people to have their say, it is a place where the rule of law can be instituted and can be reviewed and, through the electorate offices, a place where every citizen in this State has a chance to practice his or her democratic right, then the money is well spent.

I thank the Speaker for looking after the staff of the parliamentary complex, who look after us so well. I commend the Speaker for his commitment to encouraging more visitors to come to the Parliament, be they tourists, students, members of community organisations or guests at State functions. I note some of the comments made by other members about student visits. As a teacher of 20 years, I strongly believe that the importance of student visits to this place is to assist students to understand the parliamentary processes and the processes of Government. They are not tourists who have to look at all the little baubles that are in the various display cases on Level 3 of the Annexe. It is within this Chamber, and the Legislative Council Chamber, that the real work is done.

The member for Indooroopilly referred to changes to the tours of Parliament House. The changes will not diminish the work that the students will do; it will allow more groups to come through Parliament House and do real work within this Chamber. In fact, tomorrow I will be speaking with some Year 11 and Year 12 students from Padua College and also the Year 7 students from Wavell State School. It is the processes of Parliament that are important, not pointing out to students various features of architecture which they can see in almost any building.

The opening of the George Street gates is important, too. That makes this building much more welcoming, because people can see the building more easily and can come in off George Street from QUT and elsewhere. We have improved the security procedures in this place. Therefore, the security of the building is not compromised by this move, which serves to reinforce this building as the people's place.

I am also pleased with certain changes that have occurred in electorate offices and with the support given to our electorate officers. I am pleased that the Speaker has honoured his commitment and instituted a process of visiting electorate offices throughout the State. Mr Speaker has adopted a practical and down-to-earth approach so that he can see what is happening around the State rather than just hearing members talking about it.

In my remaining time I wish to make a couple of other comments. I hope the support given by the Parliament to its committees continues. Through their bipartisan approach, the committees can achieve things that cannot be achieved through the Minister/shadow Minister adversarial system. The committees of which I have been a member in this Parliament have been hardworking and have achieved results that have been to the benefit of the whole State, and there has been less tension because of their bipartisan approach.

I look forward to seeing the outcome of the current review of Standing Orders. In my role as Whip I am made aware of difficulties that Ministers, staff and members face because they do not know when Bills will be coming on. I hope we can move to a system under which it is agreed that a certain number of Bills will pass through the House at a given time. A bipartisan working committee would then

allocate time to that process, within which there would be flexibility to allow people a shorter or longer time. In that way we would know when the debate on a Bill would finish. I think it is a waste of time and money to have senior public servants sitting around here sometimes for a day and a half and into the late hours of the night not knowing when a Bill is coming on. We can make changes that will not diminish accountability but which will improve the flow of legislation through the House. I thank all of those who have made this House and the electorate offices run smoothly so that our constituents—the people of Queensland—have a real demonstration of their democracy.
