



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

Hansard 1 August 2001

APPROPRIATION BILLS—ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.31 p.m.): In joining this debate on the report of Estimates Committee A, I also wish to thank the Speaker and the staff of the parliament for their courtesies. This was an important estimates session for us, because we discussed a number of issues. We all recognise that Parliament House is one of the precious icons of Queensland well worth a visit by groups of children or other visitors.

Every visitor is amazed at the quality of this building. People find it hard to believe that in 1859 and in the early 1860s the artisans of this state were able to build such a wonderful parliament building of which everyone can be proud. It is also important that the stonework is being maintained. It can crumble and so on. If it is not looked after in a planned maintenance program every year, both outside and inside, we will not be doing justice to past and future generations. It is good to see that that is continuing.

We raised a couple of issues. One concerned staff and job security. We think very highly of the work undertaken by the Parliamentary Library staff and by the various committee staff. We brought up the issue of the external review that is under way. Mr Speaker mentioned that the review was looking at efficiencies and any duplication. The point that has to be remembered is that at times the workload in the Parliamentary Library is mammoth. During a parliamentary session and just prior to it many requests come in. During the parliamentary session members want things yesterday—immediately. It is the nature of politics that very often there are huge peaks and troughs in demand on library services. It is probably one of the most essential services in this place; accurate information and reference material assists in making our debate in the parliament sensible. All honourable members would urge Mr Speaker to consider carefully the recommendations of the review and make sure that we look after the job security of and overall service level provided by officers in the library and committees.

Some concern was expressed about security. It is far better to have a human presence, particularly if we have not remembered to bring our swipe cards. I acknowledge that the fence has probably provided some additional security. To many honourable members—and all the members who live outside of Brisbane—this place is their home for almost half a year. We live in our room upstairs and we attend parliament, committee meetings and go about our day-to-day business. Security is important for the staff and for honourable members. It is something that we would never want to see transgressed.

The issue of casual staff in catering services was raised. I wish to compliment the staff. We are here for long periods and this is our de facto home. It is nice to have full-time staff around. We can get to know them and that makes this place a bit more friendly. And that is not to take away from the professionalism of the casual staff.

I thank also the Hansard staff and the parliamentary attendants for the work that they do, particularly for their long hours and for meeting the demands that we put upon them. I mention also the work being undertaken in our electorate offices, where there are a lot of changes at the moment. This is happening in a reasonably timely fashion. There are a lot of new members and a lot of changes are taking place, particularly with respect to the second electorate officer. We were pleased that we were at least able to get relief staff—and I know this is pretty important to members like the member for Gregory—for those members who have single electorate officers but who have towns throughout their

electorate. Under the original system they were to be replaced with an officer from one of the other offices—something that was not possible.

Finally, I thank you, Mr Speaker, for taking notice of the comments that we made. They are made in the spirit of making sure that this parliament is preserved for people and that the staff are well supported—they are great staff—and so that the amenity of this place is maintained.
