



Speech by

Hon. RAY HOLLIS

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

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APPROPRIATION BILLS—ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Mr SPEAKER (2.56 p.m.): May I say thank you to all members of the committee for their, in the main, very kind words about the running of this parliament and the Parliamentary Service. This is my fourth budget as the person in charge of the Parliamentary Service. The emphasis that I have placed on this area over the past three years has been on the service area. Through the wonderful work of our parliamentary staff and through giving that service to our members—whether it is in the form of IT, the facilities in our electorate offices or the facilities in our annexe offices—we are able to help our constituents, the people of Queensland, whom we are all here to represent. If we can do anything in this House through the Parliamentary Service to improve that service to our constituents, then I think that we do a good job.

Today, a couple of comments have been made about the Parliamentary Library and the library review. I thought that I answered questions very clearly at the estimates hearing about that. From time to time any manager, whether it is the Speaker of the House or a minister, needs to look at how sections under his or her control are operating. That is the whole idea of the review. The Clerk of the Parliament, under the Financial Administration and Audit Act, and I, under the Parliamentary Service Act, have a duty to do this from time to time. We have carried out quite a few reviews and there will be more to come. There is certainly no way that these reviews are designed to create job losses or changes of any great significance; they are all about improving efficiency and letting us know how efficient those areas are.

I have not received the full reports yet, but I can tell members that I have read the report on the parliamentary committees section, for instance, and it is a glowing tribute to the work of that program. I think that it is really important that, when we have queries about efficiencies, we can produce that report and say, 'Yes, we have had a review and this is what they are doing and we are very happy with the job that they are doing.'

A couple of members spoke about the historical significance of this place. As members know, we have changed around a lot of things. We have done a lot with the Speaker's gallery, the Premier's gallery, the Clerk's gallery and also what I call the local government corner. We have the Centenary of Federation rooms and we also have the exhibition foyer, which now holds an exhibition on the abolition of the upper house. All of those things are part of making this place more attractive to the people who come here. I have found that, since we have been carrying out these improvements and, more particularly, placing the inscriptions beside the portraits which tell people about the persons whom they are looking at, the tours are taking a lot longer to conduct. People are gaining a greater appreciation of this building.

Over 100 people came to the opening of the exhibition on the abolition of the upper house. We have received several letters to say how good it is that we are doing something about the living history of this place, rather than just hanging up a few portraits of people whom no-one knows anything about. When we hold the estimates hearings next year, I hope that members will hear about a war service exhibition on all the parliamentarians who have carried out war service. We hope to do an exhibition on the 19 years of Joh. All of those things are important, so that visitors realise the significance of the place and of the people who worked here. This place was a part of their lives for many, many years and we should recognise their contribution to the state of Queensland.

A question was raised about the mobile phone limit. Unfortunately the member for Keppel is not here at the moment. We had this argument last year as a difficulty had arisen when one member absolutely exceeded all expectations on mobile phone costs. It is my responsibility to make sure that we rein in that sort of problem. We looked at the averages. The average spent on mobile phones is \$800 per person. Therefore, I think a \$1,500 limit is fairly reasonable, because that is nearly double the average use. Whilst there are some concerns about that, I would urge all members of the shadow cabinet to lobby Ministerial Services Branch for extra funding for phones.

If we again did what we did two or three years ago and took away the limits on phone use, things can happen that can cause a problem with my budget. I am proud of the fact that, with the four budgets that I have been in control of, we have never gone over budget. We have always kept within budget and improved services at the same time. The bottom line for any manager is to say, 'We have so much money to spend. We will ensure that it is not only spent efficiently and on increasing services to members, but also spent with a regard to the fact that we have to keep within the budget.' If shadow ministers really want to do something about changing the limits on mobile phone expenditure, I urge them to lobby the MSB. In the next two years as Speaker, I will continue to ensure that this House remains the people's House.
