



Speech by

**JEFF SEENEY**

**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

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Hansard 20 August 2003

**APPROPRIATION BILLS—ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A**

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.06 p.m.): I appreciate the opportunity to make some comments about Estimates Committee A even though I did not participate in the committee hearing. I think it is important that I lend bipartisan support for many of the things that have already been said in the debate with regard to the report of this estimates committee. I reinforce the concept that this parliament is a very important place. It is more important than all of us and it would be too easy for whoever is in this place to use it as a political issue.

There is no doubt that the money that is required to keep this parliament up to the standards that many speakers have already spoken about as being necessary would seem to be an exorbitant amount to people in the general community, and it would be easy to make a political issue out of that. I hope we never see that day. I hope that irrespective of where the political parties sit in this parliament there is bipartisan support for the maintenance of this parliamentary precinct to the very best standard, because it is the house that belongs to all of Queensland. It should be maintained to a standard that all of Queensland can be proud of, that every Queenslanders can be proud of. It certainly should not be the subject of political point scoring in respect of the amount of money that it costs to do that.

In that regard, Mr Speaker, I wish you well in your endeavours to increase the amount of money that is available to you and whoever becomes Speaker after you in maintaining this place to the great standard that it is at the moment. As other speakers have said, that has not always been the case, but we hope that it always will be the case. It should be a place that all Queenslanders can be proud of and that all Queenslanders can come and visit and take pride in. In that respect, I also endorse the comments that have been made about the school tours and the availability of this place to people who casually walk past and see the sign out the front that says that tours are available. That is a great opportunity to access this place that I think should be further encouraged. I know it does take time in terms of staff time, but those staff do a great job. I also congratulate those who do that job, and do it so well.

Unfortunately, my electorate is in a regional area and I do not have the opportunity to get as many schools and community groups down here as do Brisbane based members. Interestingly, the previous member stated that he was able to entertain P&C and Neighbourhood Watch groups in the parliamentary precinct. I wish that great opportunity were available to members such as me who represent regional areas in Queensland.

**Ms Keech:** We could always do a regional parliament.

**Mr SEENEY:** I will hold the member to that. I will look for that in the next term.

I wish also to make some comments about the electorate offices, which need to be maintained to a certain standard. In the main I think they are up to standard. Electorate offices are very much the face of parliamentarians and the public image of the parliament in communities right across Queensland. It is important that they be maintained to a similar standard as other professions in the community; we do have a professional role. I acknowledge that that costs money and that a lot of effort has been put into upgrading offices and equipment available to the members and staff who work in them—and so it should be.

There is a bit of an issue concerning the second electorate officer. One of the greatest improvements in terms of our being able to do our common job of representing our electorates has been the appointment of the second electorate officer. Without any doubt at all, that has been the

greatest single initiative that has helped us to perform our core responsibility, irrespective of where we sit in the parliament. The issue of the remuneration for that second officer needs to be resolved. I trust that the Speaker has that issue in mind.

Time expired.