



Speech by

Lawrence Springborg

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; ESTIMATES A

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.28 p.m.): At the outset, I commend the committee chair for the job that she did in chairing Estimates Committee A and I also commend the other members for the way that we were able to work together constructively. I would like to touch on just one issue that arose out of the report before commenting on some other matters and that is the disappearance of silverware, which I raised on the day of the hearing. I principally raised that issue on the day because, as I said to Mr Speaker, it concerns me that some people think that they can souvenir stuff out of this place. They may not consider it theft; they just do it. Whilst it may be true that some of the silverware might be lying around here unaccounted for because it might be in a member's room, I certainly know that every day the cleaners come in and clean my room and put things in the drawers. So it probably would not be very difficult to ascertain what is there. Certainly, there may be some silverware lying around. But my real concern—and I have experienced this in the past with people—is that people think that because they are at the parliament, the silverware looks okay and they can put it in their pockets and take it away. I remember saying to somebody one day, 'If you do that, you will never, ever come back into this place again and I will make sure of it.' That occurred in the cafeteria. I thought that it was just not on. That is why I raise that issue.

I want to talk generally about the resources of members of parliament. As members of parliament, I think our electorates are resourced reasonably well. I do think there are some issues that we need to look at, and one of those is members who have large electorates and who are required to travel and fly within those electorates. I am not necessarily one of them, but there are five members who have large electorates and I think the internal flight allowance they receive is not enough. I think that is something which should be reviewed.

Mr SPEAKER interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I am raising it here, Mr Speaker, because it impacts upon the operation of a member of parliament and we need to talk about it. Sometimes people seek to ridicule what we as members of parliament receive. I commend the Deputy Chair of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, the member for Toowoomba South, for the fabulous job he did on ABC Radio the other morning in standing up for members' travel. It is not a popular thing to do. A person came on talkback radio later on and said, 'I do not travel very far at all with my work and I virtually spend that amount.'

We have to travel. If you do not travel somewhere, people criticise you. We have people contacting us all the time—and I am sure other members do as well—asking us to go to Cairns, Townsville, Mount Isa or wherever the case may be. We do not have enough hours in the day to be able to do it and sometimes we are getting down to the very limit of our resources to do it. I think we should be prepared to stand up for that. I also acknowledge the Chair of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. I think she does a fantastic job. I think it was a realistic report of that committee which was put forward by Mr Horan the other day.

There is one problem which we need to address, and it is not necessarily in the Speaker's field, but it is this linkage between the parliamentary IT network and Ministerial Services Branch. I look around this place and I see the ease of networking for members who are not looked after by MSB, and that is fine. I think that is great. We have a network here which the Ministerial Services Branch looks after and it is different. It does not necessarily link in.

Mr SPEAKER: They are very envious of us.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I think parliamentary IT does a fantastic job—an outstanding job. I am not saying that MSB does not try to, but here we are in the 21st century and we cannot talk to each other. We have just recently had a port put in our electorate offices by MSB so we can get out through an ADSL connection, but we cannot access our electorate office network. So we have Ministerial Services which looks after me, my deputy leader and the ministers, and then there is the Parliamentary Service which looks after other members of parliament. I think we need to work that out.

The other issue is video on demand. Ordinary members of this parliament for some years have been able to plug into their computers in their offices and play back video on demand. It may surprise members that the ministers, the Leader of the Opposition and they Deputy Leader of the Opposition cannot do that because we are on a different system. We do not have that access. We have to go around to the library if we want to do that. Some might say, 'Woe is me, bad luck,' but I think this is crazy. We should have a similar system. We are members of parliament as well and we should be able to access video on demand from our offices. I think there is some talk of fixing that up, but we need to work more cooperatively and more constructively in addressing those sorts of issues.

Time expired.