



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL (ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A)

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (11.47 am): I want to thank the member for Ipswich for her chairmanship of Estimates Committee A. I was privileged to be part of that committee. I want to thank Leanne Clare and the parliamentary research staff who assisted and all of the parliamentary staff who were there on that day. I also want to thank Mr Speaker for being present at the hearing. I want to commend him for his visits to the electorate offices. I know that I was not able to be there when he came to Surfers Paradise, but he certainly took on board the issues that we have in our office.

I also want to mention the security upgrades that were raised during the committee. They have certainly been welcomed. When we all had to go out by the QUT entrance it seemed to me that, post September 11, it would be pretty easy to cause some sort of incident that would have long-term repercussions. I think it is commendable that those security upgrades are continuing. I know there are some members who were here before I came who obviously do not like change regarding the access to various floors. All I can say is that if that is what you come in with and that is what you are used to, then you do not consider criticising it. It is just something you learn to live with. We all have to learn to live with these security issues the way they are at the moment, because it will only take one incident and the parliament will never be the same again.

I also note the Speaker's comments about metal detectors. If the cutlery keeps disappearing, then I would not have a problem with guests of the parliament being put through metal detectors on their way out—and I would not have a problem with the same thing occurring for members. We are not saying that we are better than anyone else and we do not want those in the fourth estate to say that we are being treated differently. It should not be an issue. If we are having a problem with items disappearing, then we need to do whatever we can.

I believe that members of the public find this place impressive. They are interested in any gifts that they can get—and that could be something that they might take, as has been evidenced by the theft of the cutlery. We may have to improve our gift list. I know that the Speaker is currently considering that issue. I think if we did that members of the public would find that there were more accessible gifts at a reasonable price. I have provided to the Speaker some samples of the gifts that are available from the Western Australia parliament. I think that if we provided those things, we might have people buying things instead of stealing them.

I asked my electorate staff—because they are the ones who give me much support—for their opinions about IT services especially and the other services that are provided by the parliament. Michael Zissis, Cathy Ermer and Josie Stinson are great staff members of mine for the electorate of Surfers Paradise. They said that the stationery supplies are fantastic and efficient. In terms of the catering and staff for those who come to the parliament, the food is great and cheap. The Strangers Coffee and Wine Bar upgrade is lovely. I think all members would agree that it is a much more hospitable place.

Mr Speaker: Don't talk about prices. Don't say that it is cheap; it is inexpensive.

Mr LANGBROEK: I know that the prices are quite reasonable, given that we are living away from home. The changes to the Strangers Dining Room have also been noted and appreciated by the guests whom I have brought to this place.

In terms of the library—Mary Seefried and the staff—yesterday it was great to have Kerryn Newton come and conduct a survey with me. My staff have said that they find the library service very efficient. They appreciate the regular asking of members and their staff as to whether the services are okay or whether they could be improved.

I would like to move on to the IT comments from my staff. The speed of the internet server is fantastic. It is fast, which means that we in our offices are more efficient. However, the speed of the server is irrelevant when the reliability of the server is suspect. I have been informed that the server and, therefore, the connection to the internet and the email inbox is unreliable. It often drops out for 10 minutes or more. With electronic mailing being the primary means of communicating with our constituents now, the efficiency of our office is negatively affected by these drop-outs to a degree that requires making a note of it here.

While on the subject of emails, the limit of the email inbox also raises specific noteworthy concerns. The email inbox storage space is too small. This limits the amount of correspondence and emails that we can store in our inboxes. This limitation forces us to delete older emails and our sent items so that the new ones can come through. My staff are in the habit of printing out emails when they come through and then deleting them from the inbox so as to not risk emails being rejected. That means not only more paper being used in the office but also it is particularly a problem when constituents send attachments with emails. Some members have had to have private email accounts because anything with an attachment cannot be accessed.

Finally, in terms of paper wastage in our electorate offices, I think we should be embracing recycling opportunities. Just as we have the Visy bins in parliament—they allow documents to be discarded in a central location and remain secured until they are properly destroyed—it would be environmentally responsible for such services in our electorate offices to be investigated. Once again, I would like to record my thanks to all the staff for their service to Estimates Committee A.