



Speech by

Ray Hopper

MEMBER FOR DARLING DOWNS

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

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (11.57 am): I rise to speak to the report of Estimates Committee A. I am very proud to be one of the 89 members of this parliament. Many members come from country or rural areas and for them this place is a home away from home. We spend roughly one-third of the year here. We have our room here and I can honestly say that I have never been treated so well in all my life. The staff—from security through to the cooks through to the clerks—in this complex are simply unbelievably wonderful people. The respect with which we are held in this place certainly makes it a lot easier for country members. We are away from our families when we are down here and at times the life of a member of parliament can be extremely daunting.

I want to comment on the three girls who work with me in my electorate offices. Donna Barnes has been an electorate officer for over 20 years. She has worked for four or five National Party members: Clive Berghofer, Mike Horan, Tony Elliott and a number of other members. She is a wonderful chief electorate officer. Also, Julie and Lisa back me up. We have a great team in our Dalby and Oakey offices. I fund that Oakey office out of my own pocket to service that end of my electorate.

A number of speakers in this debate have spoken about the missing cutlery and what has happened in Parliament House. I, too, like the member for Thuringowa, was at a dinner the other night and at first they formally recognised me and then they came and took my silverware away and put plastic knives and forks down on the table in front of me. It was all very funny and it was a great laugh. I have a sense of humour and they are all very good people. But the fact of the matter is that that is what we are wearing as members of parliament and that should not happen. People out there do not understand the number of functions that this House holds and the number of people who come in through security. They use silverware and cutlery that have the emblem embossed on them. I would say that quite often a little token is put in the pocket and taken home. But we get the blame and I do not think we should have to wear that. I would ask Mr Speaker to look at the possibility of people being scanned on their way out. It is as simple as that. I know that that could cause embarrassment to a lot of people but so be it. When these things happen they have to be cleaned up.

I heard the member for Ipswich have a chop at a few National Party past premiers and what has happened in the past. I do not think we should get into finger-pointing.

Ms NOLAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is misleading the House. It is not true to say that I named or had a chop at anyone.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): Order! There is no a point of order.

Mr HOPPER: We all have functions here. I know that a lot of Labor Party branch meetings are held in this place, too, but we are not going to point the finger. We have to look seriously at this whole situation.

One of the things that worries me is the number of old people who come here for functions who have to cross the road from the car park to Parliament House. We need a pedestrian crossing there. With people going to and from uni and the number of cars that use that road, I have noticed on a number of occasions

that it is very hard for people to get across that road. I do not think there would be great expense involved in putting a crossing there. We need to put a crossing there.

The urinals in the men's toilets probably flush about 10 to 15 litres of water and they are automatic. I think they could be changed to being manual and that would be a great water saver. When people are not in the parliamentary precinct the urinals are still flushing away, and that is just water going down the drain. That is another problem that must be addressed.

Another thing that concerns me is that as country members we quite often arrive at the Parliamentary Annexe at 3.30 pm or 4 pm and the food premises are shut down. I think we should at least be able to get a sandwich or something until 4 or 5 o'clock in the afternoon. I would ask Mr Speaker to have another look at that.

I note that a number of speakers mentioned retiring members of parliament. Mr Speaker himself is one. I congratulate him on his retirement. But there will be a number of members here who will be retiring who do not know that they are retiring. So that will be interesting as well.

Mr Terry Sullivan: Retire by popular demand.

Mr HOPPER: I note the Government Whip is retiring as well.

The Dalby office is finally being renovated, and I thank Mr Speaker for that. Work is going to commence on that next week. It is very much in need. We have no wheelchair access. I remember standing in this House this time last year talking about that very issue. It would be great to have those renovations done. We can actually see into the office next door and hear every word they say and they can hear every word I say.

Time expired.