



Speech by

## Hon. Margaret Keech

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

Hansard Wednesday, 5 August 2009

---

### APPROPRIATION BILLS: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

**Hon. MM KEECH** (Albert—ALP) (12.36 pm): I am very pleased to be able to contribute to the debate on the report to the parliament for Estimates Committee A. Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on your first estimates committee. I know that you enjoyed it very much. Although I was not a member of the committee, I want to put on record my thanks not only to the Speaker but also to the staff in the parliamentary precinct for the great work that they do in supporting all of the 89 members of this House. I really want to commend the way in which the Speaker holds his position with such great honour and to also commend his staff, who are always open and friendly and most helpful. Mr Speaker, I would like you to pass on our thanks to your staff.

As chief Government Whip for the 53rd Parliament, I would particularly like to acknowledge the quality of the staff here in the parliament and the way in which they really go above and beyond the call of duty to support us. There are many joys in being the Government Whip—

**Mr Gibson** interjected.

**Mrs KEECH:** Do not laugh. It is a very busy job, but it also has its rewards. One of the most satisfying aspects of the new position that I hold for this parliament is the opportunity to further strengthen the relationships I have had with the parliamentary staff since 2001.

People ask me, 'What is the role of the Government Whip?' Many people in our electorates have absolutely no idea. They have a view of women in black boots—which I am actually wearing—but I am not holding a whip. I say to them that I believe in some ways the position is a little like being a conductor. I am responsible for 51 members, trying to get them to all sing together from the same song sheet at the one time, which sometimes can be a little challenging but on most occasions we do good work together. I believe that the music is only as beautiful as the team is strong. With our government, we have very strong leaders in Premier Anna Bligh and her cabinet, and I am most ably supported by my two deputy whips, the member for Mount Isa, Betty Kiernan, and the member for Sandgate, Vicky Darling.

The other half of the team is the hardworking parliamentary staff led by the Clerk, Neil Laurie, and the Deputy Clerk, Michael Ries. Nothing is too much trouble for the Clerk and his office. They are always available at a minute's notice—they are even available if I have to call them at home—to offer support to honourable members through tactful and confidential advice. On behalf of the deputy whips and myself, I thank the chamber attendants and Hansard.

I thank the IT staff, and particularly Mike Coburn. Recently when my electorate office was broken into and the laptop was stolen Mike was of great assistance to me. Although the Beenleigh police acted very quickly, we still have not been able to find the laptop. Mike was able to provide me with a new laptop within hours. That was something that I really appreciated, particularly since parliament was about to start.

Many thanks go to property services manager Jason Gardiner, and the parliamentary catering services and Jaakko Ponsi for the terrific work they do in ensuring we are all well fed. A person who is very

important, particularly to new members, is the man responsible for senior assets, telecommunications and pagers, Colin Ogle. I thank Barry Hensler, who is responsible for all electorate accommodation and who does a great job in ensuring that my electorate office is well resourced, particularly with the new security upgrades.

Like my deputy whip, I would like to thank the invisible ladies whose faces we may not know but whose voices we know very well. They are the ladies on the switch. Pauline Kavanagh and Patricia Reeves do an outstanding job. They are here for as long as we are. If we sit till 4 am in the morning, the ladies on the switch support us. I commend to the House the report of Estimates Committee A.