



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Wednesday, 4 August 2010

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.35 pm): It is my pleasure to rise to speak, as the deputy chair of this committee, to thank other committee members for the contributions and, as the chairman, the member for Yeerongpilly, has already said, to acknowledge the support of Ali Jarro and Tamara Vitale, the research director and executive assistant. The first session of this estimates hearing, which examines the Parliamentary Service, is not quite as willing as what comes subsequently, but it was very interesting to ask the Speaker questions about a number of issues to do with the Parliament House Conservation Plan. I note that today we have been talking about the 142nd anniversary of sitting in this House in the 150th year of parliament being established in the colony.

There were some interesting issues raised. I asked about security, and I think that is particularly salient given what has happened today. It shows that in an ever-changing world these are issues that this parliament is going to have to wrestle with. Last week I was at Westminster in London—the mother of parliament—and it was very poignant to see where an MP had been blown up in 1979. It changed the circumstances at Westminster and the security there is now very intense.

I have mentioned before, in the years that I have been here, that Speaker McGrady started to bring in some major changes, as did Speaker Hollis, in terms of access to many of the floors of parliament. Unfortunately in Queensland, from what we have seen today with people thinking that they can assail the building and do things that are completely inappropriate, we have to make sure that we secure this place. If we have an incident here that leads to some tragedy involving a member of the public or a member of this parliament, it will change the nature of this place forever. I think that, for all that we know we are an egalitarian society, we still need to make sure that this place is secure. I will support, and my side will support, the Speaker in all of his efforts to make sure that we do everything we can to make sure that the parliament and its surrounds are secured as well as they can be.

It was very disappointing to see a member of the public unfurling a banner in the public gallery during question time. The Speaker has already spoken to me about plans to put in place better educational processes in the gallery with perhaps a glassed-in section that will help schoolchildren to learn more about what is happening in front of them instead of just wondering who all the members are and not really knowing all about procedure. That will be a very beneficial educational process that will engage more with the community. The security issues that we saw this morning in question time and then, very disappointingly, the protest that came on top of the building later in the day really need to be addressed. I know that the Speaker will make sure that those issues are addressed. I want to assure him of our support for anything that preserves the institution that we have. For all that it is an egalitarian state, we need to ensure that we have proper security.

One of the issues that did arise in terms of members' behaviour was that of engagement with members of the community of Queensland. When Queenslanders communicate with MPs there should be appropriate use of that communication. The issue arose after a recent incident in Mount Isa where the member for Mount Isa received an email from a member of the community and then apparently sent that

email on to their employer which led to that person losing their job. I raised at the estimates committee whether we should look at our induction program and the code of ethics that we give to parliamentarians and whether we need to have some sort of educational process that deals with those types of situations.

We also spoke about a number of other issues. One issue that is dear to my heart, and I know the Speaker's heart, is engaging with all Queenslanders, whether they are of multicultural descent or have disabilities. I congratulate the Speaker on his efforts with his advisory committee, the members of whom are speaking in this debate today. They have asked to do so and I have encouraged them to do so. We are committed to working with the Speaker to make this, as he has, fair to both sides. We appreciate his efforts in that regard. We are committed to working with him in the future.