




Speech By  
**Peter Russo**

**MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2016

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL**

 **Mr RUSSO** (Sunnybank—ALP) (2.30 pm): I rise as chair of the Finance and Administration Committee to speak to the examination of the budget estimates and to present report No. 26 on the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2016. I pass on the recommendation of the committee that all proposed expenditure as detailed in the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment. On behalf of the committee, I thank the Speaker, the Clerk of the Parliament and their staff for attending our committee hearing on 19 July. The detailed information provided to the committee, the relevant experience and rationale for the changes were very helpful to the committee in our consideration of the proposed expenditure.

We were informed that this year's expenditure is required to keep pace with the rapidly developing structure of our parliament. It was noted that as our parliament grows and develops so, too, must our Parliamentary Service. As was pointed out in the presentation to the committee by the Speaker, the Parliamentary Service's current organisational structure was designed some 15 years ago. In this time, significant procedural changes have occurred in response to developments in technology, including the broadcasting of parliament, the *Record of Proceedings* and the introduction of e-petitions.

In addition to this, we were informed that the number of electorate office staff has doubled from 89 to 180 full-time-equivalent positions and the members' remuneration system has been completely remodelled during this time. The Parliamentary Service's current structure was not designed to cope with these significant developments and a new strategic plan and organisational structure has been developed to ensure that the Parliamentary Service remains efficient into the future. We were informed that these proposed structural changes will be undertaken within the current resources available to the Parliamentary Service.

We were also informed that the most significant strain on our parliamentary services stems from our increased reliance on our hardworking committee staff. As was pointed out by the Speaker, although parliament sits approximately 16 to 18 weeks of the year, the committees are constantly working. It was pointed out that, if the amendments proposed by the Constitution of Queensland and Other Legislation Bill 2016 currently before the House are to come into effect, committees would be allowed to self-initiate inquiries on matters within their portfolio. As was noted, this increased committee activity would be likely to place a strain on the already large workload of the committee staff. It is for this reason that a proposal was put before the committee that three additional full-time positions be provided for in the committee office. Our committee accepted that this additional resourcing would be necessary to support the projected increased use of the parliamentary committees.

The committee also noted the current progress of capital works overseen by the parliament. The Speaker reported to the committee on the restoration effort that is taking place on old Parliament House. We note that after almost 25 years the restoration of the external stonework will be completed shortly and that the remainder of the interior is soon to be repainted.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the Speaker for his informative address to the budget estimates hearing, as well as for his skilful stewardship of our parliament. I also thank the Clerk and the officers from the Parliamentary Service for their expert advice in relation to the proposed appropriation measures and for answering questions put to them by the committee. Finally, I thank my fellow committee members and our wonderful committee staff for the tireless support they provide.