




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (3.05 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution concerning report No. 26, Budget Estimates—Appropriation (Parliament) Bill. I echo the words of the member for Callide in relation to this fine institution, which incorporates both the buildings and obviously all of the records. We know that when guests come to this place and we show them around they all love to look at the reading room and they love to look at the history. There was a time in this building's history when, if money had not been allocated, this whole building may have been condemned. It would be a real shame and a loss of part of Queensland's history if we did not have this fine building. Making sure that the stonework, the building and all of these things are maintained on a regular basis is critically important so that the people of Queensland can be proud of the institution that exists here.

The history and the institution itself needs to be maintained, and I am pleased with the bipartisan approach that has been taken. Level 7 is another good example of something that needed upgrading, because when we brought people here for barbecues it was like we were stuck in the 1970s. We bring overseas guests and visitors here to show them how important Queensland is on a national level, and I think that maintenance and bringing it up to scratch is a very good thing and I am pleased that it has happened.

Mr Speaker has run a good administration when it comes to the parliament itself. I certainly find that all of the members have been well accommodated and looked after, and I would like to thank his staff, the Clerk and all of the Clerk's staff. As we know, when we have technical issues that need discussion or when we are trying to find out different things when we are under time pressure here, there are people running around to make sure that we have the ability to do our jobs well. Further to that, I would like to talk a little bit about the library and the services there. I find it immensely helpful to be able to access a group of people who have professional research skills, who can look into hard topics and spend the time to give you a concise report, and I certainly thank them for that. When you are looking into different bills and different things that are going on in the parliament or things that you are interested in investigating on behalf of your constituents, I find the resources that they have invaluable.

There are, unfortunately, a couple of things that I would like to raise and one relates to our office staff. As was mentioned before, for eight weeks of the year we are down to one office staff. If only that were true. If you have staff who have been in the parliamentary system for 10 years, they are entitled to long service leave; people are entitled to sick leave; and people are obviously entitled to their annual leave and to carers leave. This means that quite often you can find yourself in an office that is undermanned—

A government member: Understaffed.

Mr WATTS: Understaffed. The difficulty with that—

Mr McArdle: 'Underpersoned'.

Mr WATTS: 'Underpersoned', if you please! I am sure that Donna and Wendy will be very happy to know that I am talking about making sure we have enough people and resources to deal with constituents, who are not only emailing but also coming in through our door. I think that is something that needs to be looked at by the CLA over a period of time—to make sure we can backfill to ensure we are not overly stressing the staff in our electorate offices so we can service the increasing needs that are coming forward from the community.

I mention IT. I was one of the very fortunate people who got a Mac laptop. It would be really good if I could actually print from it. It would be really good if, when it updated, it did not shut down my phones and my computer system. I think it is something that we need to look at. At home I pay \$89 a month for 100 gigabytes, yet in the office I have four dedicated to trying to run three staff and all of our computer systems. It causes us a great deal of difficulty when we upload a photograph and everything then goes slow for a period of time. I really hope we can look at those things going forward, as IT is something we all depend on. It needs to be as efficient and effective as possible so that we can do our jobs to the best of our ability.

(Time expired)