




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR HILL

Record of Proceedings, 18 November 2021

COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (3.40 pm): I rise to talk on the report of the 2021 budget estimates process and as a member of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly. First, I acknowledge all the members of the committee and their hard work. I particularly acknowledge the CLA's role in supporting governance in the parliament. I also acknowledge some of the things the CLA has done, particularly in terms of securing an extra staff allowance in previous years.

When I was first elected in 2004 I had 19,000 constituents in my electorate, but that has now increased to 38,000. Some electorates have over 40,000 constituents but still have only two full-time staff plus the staff relief allowance. A lot of electorate officers have told me that workloads since COVID have massively increased. We had 19,000 constituents but now have 38,000. Some electorates in Brisbane have over 40,000 but still only two full-time staff with relief staff. I really believe that there needs to be a review in regards to electorate staff support of members, particularly with the increased workload of COVID.

I believe that the current estimates process really needs to be reviewed. It is supposed to ensure parity of representation in terms of giving MPs an equal opportunity to represent their region and ask questions during the estimates process. This is not the case with the current estimates process which heavily favours the government and then the opposition, with crossbenchers getting the crumbs. It is difficult to justify flying thousands of kilometres to Brisbane to barely get a couple of minutes to ask very important questions during this estimates period. This is because the time is not allocated evenly amongst the 93 MPs.

At the moment, the government gets 50 per cent of the time allocated. Much of this would be what I call Dorothy Dixers in which only a part of the time is allocated, giving no real value to the estimates process. It is the same with the opposition which stacks the hearing, leaving very little time for crossbench members. This is not what we call 'parity' in the parliamentary process. This needs to be addressed urgently, otherwise estimates will become a non-event if it is not already so.

There are a number of other areas that can be tidied up to ensure better transparency and efficiency to ensure equity across all members of the House. I recommend some of the following: allowing questions from non-committee members to be submitted prior to the hearings so that the hearings can be dedicated to follow-up questions; transform the process to allow a free flowing of questions to minister and senior bureaucrats without the severe time allocated that reduces the ability of non-government members to continue a line of questioning; and to remove ministerial statements which simply are a waste of time and do not have any relevance to the estimates process. I thank the Speaker and for the opportunity to address these issues.