



Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2022


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (Parliament) Bill

Economics and Governance Committee, Report

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (11.26 am): I too rise to address the Economics and Governance Committee report into the Queensland parliament part of the appropriation. In doing so, let me again begin in a bipartisan way and acknowledge the great work that Mr Speaker, the Clerk of the Parliament and the entire team here do to ensure the ongoing functions of this chamber and the precinct in maintaining—as the member for Logan said—their heritage value, engaging with the broader community—after all, this is their parliament; it is not ours—and ensuring that school groups, tour groups and all sorts of locals and tourists alike can come and enjoy the parliamentary precinct.

I took the opportunity during estimates to drill down a bit to ensure that parliamentary staff are kept safe during Annexe renovations. They will be operating on a day-to-day basis in a construction worksite, and I thank Mr Speaker and the Clerk for their reassurances that everything will be done to not only comply with workplace health and safety requirements but also the wellbeing of those staff in amongst all the work that will be going on. I know that both gentlemen and their teams have also gone to great lengths to assist us as members of parliament during the transition as we operate from various meeting rooms and so on throughout the precinct. We in the opposition certainly want to place on the record our thanks to the parliamentary staff for their ongoing work in this House.

I want to take up the member for Logan's comments about some of the statements of reservation made by the opposition, particularly as they pertain to this appropriation, and to the broader sentiment and some of the reflections made by the Clerk of the Parliament in terms of the operation of committees. I took the opportunity to clarify with the Clerk some of his feedback around the committee structure itself which we have read in various submissions he has made. Perhaps we did not quite see the protection racket we have seen in previous years from deputy chairs—

Mr Stevens: Chairs!

Mr POWELL: Sorry, from the chairs; I stand corrected. Apologies, member for Mermaid Beach. How dare!! We would love it if the deputy chairs could assist us a bit more to ensure we got a few more questions in. Perhaps we did not quite see the protection racket from chairs that we have seen in previous years, but it still raised its head at various points.

The Clerk made a particular point about the role of the committees as they were deemed to have been set up back in 2011 in the review, particularly around their oversight of matters such as public works and accounts. Those comments made by the Clerk certainly give rise to what we in the opposition

have been saying—that is, it is well and truly time to have a look at the structure and operations of the committees and determine whether they are living up to the expectations that were set by both parties back in 2011 when we established this new system. I remind people that we do not have an upper house here in Queensland so the committee system has to be robust and it needs to be able to challenge elements of the operation of various ministers and their departments, particularly, as the Clerk said, around public works and accounts.

We also wanted to express our strong view that key integrity bodies, such as the Auditor-General and the Integrity Commissioner, should be tied more closely to the parliament and its committees rather than the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and that matters such as staffing and budget allocations should not be the decision of the same bodies being held to account by those integrity agencies. Again, that came through a number of committee hearings as part of the estimates process.

We also queried, as we did again today during question time, the amount of taxpayers' money being spent on both the Carne and the Trad matters around the CCC report. It does concern me that the parliament has already had to pay out \$28,000 in those matters. They are taxpayers' dollars that could be far better spent on many other things, and we anticipate that those costs will increase as those matters continue.

I will close by saying that we failed to get the assurances—and I think more importantly the people of Queensland failed to get the assurances—that this government knows what it is doing when it comes to health, housing, youth crime, cost of living and the integrity crises that are gripping this state. I know my shadow ministerial colleagues and other LNP colleagues will unpack these in their contributions over the next few hours.

(Time expired)