



Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR HILL

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2023


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (Parliament) Bill

Economics and Governance Committee, Report

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (11.40 am): As a member of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly, I rise to say a few words about the committee and the 2023 appropriation bills. I wish to thank all the members of the committee and all of the other committees for the work they do throughout the year. The CLA plays an important role in supporting governance and addressing issues facing the operations of parliament. As I have previously spoken about, the CLA was instrumental in supporting the submission to the Queensland Independent Remuneration Tribunal to ensure crossbench members were rightfully provided with a full-time parliamentary policy officer. This was previously done at the discretion of government but has now been placed with the Queensland Independent Remuneration Tribunal to ensure parity and equity for the opposition, Independents and minor parties. That had taken 30 years.

However, there are still issues we need to address in many areas and that definitely includes the current estimates process. This has been talked about every year but still has not been adequately addressed and must be reviewed. The estimates process should be limited solely to the opposition and crossbench to hold the government of the day to account. However, it is currently just another tool used by government to control the government's narrative, with further questions and scrutiny continually shut down by government members.

The current estimates process heavily favours the government. It is difficult to justify flying northern members of parliament thousands of kilometres to Brisbane when we get barely a couple of minutes to ask very important questions during estimates or to continue a particular line of questioning to ministers and departmental officers. This is partly because time is not allocated evenly amongst members of parliament, with the government receiving a large slice of the time. This gives no real value to the estimates process, which has become a backslapping exercise and, in reality, a non-event. The entire process again highlights the lack of integrity in the democratic process and is often used to stamp out any opposition.

Previously I have raised a number of issues that can be tidied up to ensure better transparency, efficiency and equity for all members of the House. This includes: allowing only opposition and crossbench members the exclusive right to ask questions of the government and hold them to account; allowing questions from the non-committee members to be submitted prior to the hearing so that the

hearing can be dedicated to follow-up questions; transforming the process to allow free-flowing questions to ministers and senior bureaucrats without the severe time allocation, which reduces the ability of non-government members to continue a line of questioning; and removing up-front ministerial statements as ministers already get the chance to tell the committee how good the government is when answering questions during estimates, which would help deliver accountability and transparency. I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to address these issues.