

2015-16 Budget Estimates
Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2015

Report No. 10, 55th Parliament
Finance and Administration Committee
September 2015

Finance and Administration Committee

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Acknowledgements

The Committee wishes to acknowledge the assistance provided by officers from the Parliamentary Service and the Speaker's Office during the course of the Committee's inquiry.

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Chair's Foreword

This report presents a summary of the Committee's examination of the Budget Estimates for the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2015*.

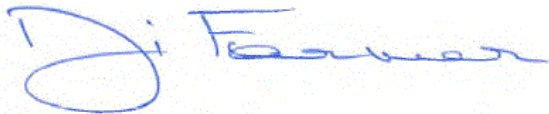
Consideration of the Budget Estimates allows for the public examination of both the responsible Minister and Chief Executive Officers of agencies within the Committee's portfolio area. This was undertaken through the questions on notice and public hearing process.

The Committee has made the following recommendation:

- that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2015*, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

On behalf of the Committee, I also wish to thank the Speaker and the officers from the Parliamentary Service for their cooperation in providing information to the Committee throughout this process.

I would also like to thank the other Members of the Committee for their hard work and valuable contribution.



Di Farmer MP
Chair

September 2015

1 Introduction

1.1 Role of the Committee

The Finance and Administration Committee (the Committee) is a portfolio committee established by the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* and the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly on 27 March 2015.¹ The Committee's primary areas of responsibility are:

- Premier, Cabinet and the Arts; and
- Treasury, Employment, Industrial Relations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

Standing orders require that each portfolio committee shall consider the Appropriation Bills and the estimates for the committee's area of responsibility. A portfolio committee must make a report at the end of its deliberations of the estimates of its portfolio area and that report must state whether the proposed expenditures referred to it are agreed to.

1.2 Referral

On 17 July 2015, the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2015* and the Estimates for the Committee's area of responsibility were referred to the Committee for investigation and report.

The Committee conducted a public hearing and took evidence about the proposed expenditure from Mr Speaker and Officers from the Parliamentary Service on 18 August 2015. A copy of the transcript of the Committee's hearing can be accessed on the Committee's web page at:

<http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-committees/committees/FAC/inquiries/current-inquiries/Estimates2015>

1.3 Aim of this report

The Committee considered the Estimates referred to it by using information contained in:

- budget papers;
- answers to pre-hearing questions on notice;
- evidence taken at the hearing; and
- additional information given in relation to answers.

This report summarises the Estimates referred to the Committee and highlights some of the issues the Committee examined.

Prior to the public hearing, the Committee provided Mr Speaker with questions on notice in relation to the Estimates. Responses to all the questions were received.

Mr Speaker's answers to the Committee's pre-hearing questions on notice and minutes of the Committee's meetings are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

¹ *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, s88 and Standing Order 194

1.4 Other Members participation

The Committee gave leave for other Members to participate in the hearings. The following Members participated in the hearings

- Mr Lawrence Springborg MP, Leader of the Opposition and Member for Southern Downs

2 Recommendation

Pursuant to Standing Order 187(1), the Committee must state whether the proposed expenditures referred to it are agreed to.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2015*, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

3 Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service

The Parliamentary Service Management Plan 2015-19 (the Plan) outlines the goals and strategic issues facing the Parliamentary Service. The four major goals in the Plan are:

- to assist the Parliament, its Committees and Members to fulfil their Parliamentary responsibilities;
- to support the business needs of the Parliament, Committees, Members, the Parliamentary Service and other clients;
- to promote the institution of Parliament and raise community awareness and understanding of its important role and functions; and
- to develop and maintain a professional and progressive Parliamentary Service.²

The following table taken from the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2015* compares the appropriations for the department for 2014-15 (budget) and 2015-16.

Appropriations	2014-15 \$'000	2015-16 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
Departmental services	84,089	84,086
equity adjustment	(2,039)	(3,188)
<i>Administered Items</i>		
Vote	82,050	87,274

Source: Queensland Government, *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2015*, Schedule 1: 6

² Queensland Government, *Queensland Budget 2015-16 Service Delivery Statements, Legislative Assembly of Queensland 2015-16: 2*

3.1 Service area - Parliamentary Precinct Support Services

This service area provides:

- advisory, information and support services to assist the Parliament, its committees and Members to fulfil their constitutional and parliamentary responsibilities; these services include Chamber, Education & Communication Services; the Committee Office; the Parliamentary Library; and Parliamentary Reporting Services;
- services to promote the institution of Parliament and raise community awareness and understanding of its important role and functions;
- services to provide a safe and secure Parliamentary precinct including Security and Attendant Services;
- accommodation and hospitality services that provide Members, staff and guests of the Parliament with an appropriate working environment; and
- organisational services that support the activities of Members and their staff; deliver and administer a range of entitlements afforded to Members pursuant to the Members' Remuneration Handbook; and maintain Parliament House building and its contents; these include Information Technology Services, Human Resource Services, Property Services, and Financial and Administrative Services.³

3.1.1 Service area highlights

In 2015-16, Parliamentary Precinct Support Services will:

- select and implement a corporate electronic document records management system;
- continue an ongoing program to replace audio-visual infrastructure equipment within the precinct;
- commence installation of a fire protection (suppression) system in Parliament House (a recommendation of the bipartisan Committee of the Legislative Assembly);
- address waterproofing issues on level 7 of the Annexe through removal of decaying structures and replacement of existing drainage system and outdoor surface (a recommendation of the bipartisan Committee of the Legislative Assembly); and
- review and commence the implementation of the next three year regional education program designed to reach key regional centres within the parliamentary term.⁴

3.1.2 Departmental capital program

Each year the Parliamentary Service develops a broad capital program which includes capital works to improve the functionality of the Parliamentary precinct, as well as the upgrade or replacement of major items of plant and equipment associated with building infrastructure and systems within the precinct. For 2015-16, the capital program will focus on:

- continuation of a major program to restore the stonework exterior of Parliament House;
- commencing installation of a fire protection (suppression) system in Parliament House (a recommendation of the bipartisan Committee of the Legislative Assembly);
- addressing waterproofing issues on level 7 of the Parliamentary Annexe through removal of decaying structures and replacement of existing drainage system and outdoor surface (a recommendation of the bipartisan Committee of the Legislative Assembly).⁵

³ Queensland Government, Queensland Budget 2015-16 *Service Delivery Statements, Legislative Assembly of Queensland* 2015-16: 4

⁴ Queensland Government, Queensland Budget 2015-16 *Service Delivery Statements, Legislative Assembly of Queensland* 2015-16: 4

3.2 Issues raised at the public hearing

Issues raised by the Committee in relation to the *Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2015* include:

- The application of the government's union encouragement clauses for employees of the Queensland Parliamentary Service;
- Community awareness activities by the Office of the Speaker for previous years and for the 2015-16 year;
- Details of the installation of the fire services in Parliament House;
- Details of the waterproofing project on level 7 of the Parliamentary Annexe and how these issues will be solved by the project;
- Reasons for the 2014-15 revenue target not being met and the 2015-16 target being lowered;
- Explanation for the increase in full-time equivalent (FTE) staff numbers and to Mr Speaker's office;
- Code of conduct in relation to Parliamentary staff;
- Procedures in regards to tabling of petitions;
- Regional sittings of parliament;
- Review of electorate office security;
- Details of the replacement of audiovisual infrastructure in 2015-16; and
- Details of regional education program – regional centres visited in the last three years and those to be visited in the next three years.

Subsequent to the public hearing the Clerk of the Parliament provided additional information to the Committee. A copy of this correspondence is contained in Appendix A.

3.3 Committee comments

The Committee congratulates the Speaker on the measures he has taken to date to reduce costs in his office and looks forward to his continued judicious stewardship of the Office and the Parliament.

⁵ Queensland Government, Queensland Budget 2015-16 *Service Delivery Statements, Legislative Assembly of Queensland 2015-16*: 7

Appendix A – Copy of correspondence from the Clerk of the Parliament



Queensland Parliamentary Service

THE CLERK OF THE PARLIAMENT
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George Street Fax: +61 7 3553 6454
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Your Ref:

Our Ref:

28 August 2015

Ms Di Farmer MP
Chair
Finance and Administration Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Ms Farmer

I refer to the following interchange which occurred in the estimates examination on 18 August 2015 regarding staff in the office of the Speaker:

Mr SPRINGBORG: You can never be sure of what will happen in politics, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: No, we do not know what will happen in politics. Again, I do not know if I will get re-elected. But, assuming I get re-elected, it is unlikely that I will continue as the Speaker in the next government whoever forms that government. Again, I am thinking that I do not want to have to go down this road of more severance payments. If there are competent staff already employed in Parliamentary Service who would like to come and spend some time in my office working in the Speaker's office, I would be keen to take them on, and we have two great staff who are now working in my office.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Has that been an option that has been taken up or offered or advised to other Speakers or sought by other Speakers in the past about using long-term members of the Parliamentary Service?

Mr SPEAKER: I do not want to get into—

Mr SPRINGBORG: I was not asking—I am just asking the Clerk.

Mr Laurie: To the best of my recollection, it has never been asked, apart from short-term fill in, if you like. But most Speakers have wanted to bring in their own staff.

[Emphasis added]

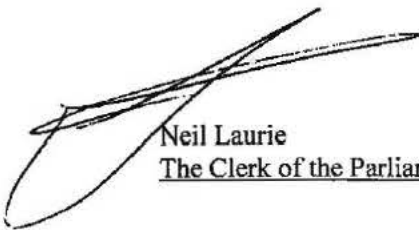
I need to correct my answer (emphasised) and provide additional information to the committee as follows:

- Corporate memory reveals that up until the election of Speaker Fouras in 1990, there had been a permanent officer in the Office who served a number of successive Speakers. This officer retired in about 1990. From this time on Speaker's appointed their own staff to their office. From about 1996, officers appointed in the office were generally placed on contract. This reflected the changing nature of the functions being performed in the office and the staff appointed to the office.
- Some permanent staff remained in or associated with the Speaker's Office until 2005/2006. For example, prior to about 2005/2006 function and room bookings were administered by a permanent parliamentary officer located within the Speaker's Office; however, when this function was transferred to Catering Services in 2005/2006 that officer was transferred on line to Catering Services. Similarly, there had been a parliamentary attendant known as the Speaker's

attendant who in the past was considered as being attached to the Speaker's office, but was a permanent Parliamentary staff member funded through Attendant Services. This officer retired in 2005 and was not replaced.

- From about 2006 to 2015 all staff in the Speaker's office were appointed by the Speaker, at a level nominated by the Speaker, on contract (the exception being temporary or short-term assistance).
- In the context of the above, my statement that "But most Speakers have wanted to bring in their own staff" is correct.
- However, in 2012 an officer at the A03 level (Executive Assistant) was seconded to Speaker's office for a short time until another officer (to be appointed on contract) was sourced. I have been reminded that the then Speaker had enquired about a longer term secondment for that officer and I was not in favour a longer-term secondment (as opposed to a contract appointment). I had not recalled that the former Speaker had asked for this longer-term secondment and I apologise for my failure to recall this instance at the hearing.
- The reasons for my not being in favour of such a secondment relates to my desire to avoid perceptions of party political partisanship and in this respect I make a number of observations.
 - Appointments within the Speaker's office have generally been perceived (by both staff and members) as an appointment within a political office (even though I readily concede it likely that some of these staff have in fact had no political membership or affiliation.)
 - The levels at which officers are appointed in the Speaker's Office have been at the discretion of the Speaker and have not been set after a job evaluation (JEMS process), unlike other positions in the Service.
 - Appointments to the Speaker's office are generally made outside of the Service's normal merit based appointment process and appointments are made on contract to reflect this fact and also acknowledge that appointments are akin to a personal services contract and terminated on each Speaker leaving office. (This means that the Service does not have to place within the Service staff that have been appointed outside our merit selection process.)
 - The longer term secondment of permanent officers run the risk of tainting the officer with "party political" perceptions of that person and it would be difficult to reassign that person back to where they had been sourced. Because they would not be on contract, this would leave the Service in a difficult position as regards that officer's future.
 - Staff in the Speaker's Office have generally changed with each Speaker, even if of the same political party. Despite being on contract it is sometimes difficult for these staff to comprehend why they cannot be found a position in the Service.
 - I have also not supported secondments to Ministerial offices for the reasons above.
- When the current Speaker was elected and he asked about seconding permanent officers to the Speaker's Office (and as a legislation officer), we had a frank discussion about the above issues. I also discussed the matter with my executive management team and my human resource manager. I took into account the roles that the current Speaker wanted these officers to perform and the level that they would be seconded. I came to the conclusion that the current Speaker being an independent member, not being part of a political party, was unique and this together with the roles to be performed sufficiently resolved many of the issues above. Predominantly, there was unlikely to be "tainting" of the officers with party political perceptions and I could easily move these officers back into their previous roles within the Service.

Yours sincerely



Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament