



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard 20 March 2001

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (11.10 a.m.): I rise to support the nomination of Elizabeth Cunningham, member for Gladstone, for Speaker. This is a woman whom I have come to know and respect. I have the highest respect not only for her work ethic but also for her strong principles. She is fair and strives to do her best without fear or favour. Her character is above reproach, and she has an unquestionable desire to pursue truth and to behave honourably in her role as a representative of her electorate and as a representative of the citizens of Queensland. She will never take her marching orders from an outside person or party leader or the caucus.

Liz Cunningham is eminently qualified to perform the role of Speaker—a role in which impartiality and non-partisanship are very critical. I am aware that Premier Beattie has flagged a reform agenda and given a commitment to clean up the electoral cheats in his own party—the cheats who sought to undermine the integrity of the electoral system. I would challenge Premier Beattie that the first reform which is needed in this parliament is an independent Speaker.

The role of Speaker should not be a political prize determined by the factions. There have been some excellent Speakers who have risen above their political allegiances to behave with independence, but there have been others with whom that has not been the case. And in a parliament where there is such a dominance of one particular party, this is a time to look towards a progressive reform of installing a truly independent Speaker. I suggest that in a parliament where, for the first time, we have such a large number of women, it is time to take a very progressive step and install our first woman Speaker of this parliament.

The Speaker is crucial to not only the smooth running of the parliament but also the fabric of democracy in Queensland. There has never been a woman Speaker of this parliament. There has never been an Independent in this role. I believe it is time that this Parliament and the people of Queensland were treated with the respect that they deserve by installing a person who is truly impartial in their role and who will impartially undertake that role. There has never been a person who has come to this role such as Liz Cunningham, with her own particular style and her own particular characteristics. I commend the nomination of Liz Cunningham for Speaker.
