



Speech by

# Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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Hansard 27 November 2003

## ELECTION OF SPEAKER

**Hon. P. D. BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (10.42 a.m.): I move—

That Raymond Keith Hollis do take the chair of this House as Speaker.

Mr Presiding Member, I welcome all members to the 51st parliament, especially the 13 new members. As we all know, our constituents have entrusted us to represent them at the very heart of Queensland's democracy, and we should listen to them, regardless of how old or young. That is a huge honour. If new members are seeking guidance on how best to serve their constituents, they could find no better role model than Ray Hollis, the member for Redcliffe. The member for Redcliffe has always served with commitment, enthusiasm and an abiding belief in the importance of this parliament.

As Speaker since 1998, he has progressively opened up the Queensland parliament to the people who own it, that is, the people of Queensland. Our parliament is now more accessible than ever. That is due in no small part to his considerable efforts. He has been a passionate supporter of the government's initiatives to make parliament more relevant and meaningful to the people of this state. Initiatives such as the Internet broadcast of proceedings and online petitions are just two. In that sense, he is a fantastic ambassador for Queensland democracy. There was no better advocate for the regional parliament in north Queensland, on which I congratulate him. He issued the warmest of welcomes to the 8,000-plus people who attended this event in September 2002, and I know he will be every bit as enthusiastic about the central Queensland parliament next year.

He has thrown open the doors of the parliament to the people of Queensland. It was the member for Redcliffe who made this place an open House on Sundays during his first term as Speaker, and in his second term he extended this to regularly include Saturdays as well. Parliament House is now open to the public every day of the week, including some public holidays. It is now open for 348 days of the year. Excluding visitors to the north Queensland parliament, since he became Speaker more than 214,000 people have undertaken guided tours of Parliament House. There have also been more than 155,000 schoolchildren who have gained a better appreciation of democracy by visiting here. Many of them have also been greeted by Ray Hollis and his wife, Diane.

All of these highlights and his understanding mean that this place is run a lot better than it used to be. During his tenure as Speaker, the House has sat for 264 days. For two years running we have had Science in Parliament. That involves a total of about 400 scientists. The experiment has been such a success that Science in Parliament is becoming an annual feature on the parliamentary calendar. The member for Redcliffe has continued the restoration of this historic building and recently oversaw the refurbishment of the level 5 conference room and the media conference room as well.

Mr Presiding Member, this heightened accessibility brings added scrutiny. Like never before we are all in the public gaze, which is exactly what should happen. In our troubled world, people expect their leaders to be disciplined, dignified and honest. We are all leaders. They want debate to be constructive and respectful, so the Speaker's role has never been more important. It is the Speaker who ensures that the debate is of a high standard. To demand high standards the Speaker needs to be fair, and the member for Redcliffe has always shown his fairness. In fact, there have been times when I have even thought he has been too fair, but in the interests of democracy I respect his fairness. He can stand on his record to command respect from everyone in this House.

His strong sense of justice and fairness is rooted in his life experiences and expressed in his activities outside parliament. He chairs his local Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal. He embodies how life in Australia is a great leveller. People can come from humble beginnings to make it in this country, and that is in no small way due to our democracy.

Ray Hollis was born in England on 30 January 1940 and came to Australia as a merchant seaman in 1962. He is the father of four children and is married to Diane. Before becoming a parliamentarian on 2 December 1989, he worked on the railways, as a farm hand, a galley boy, a cook, a paper mill operator and a steward. He also sold insurance, ran his own transport and distribution businesses, and worked in Victoria in corrective services. Ray has lived and worked in the real world. He is an ideal Speaker. He is the right person to be the Speaker of a parliament that must connect with the community.

I believe today's members can give parliament more meaning for the people of Queensland. We come from a wide variety of backgrounds and we remain, with 31 women members, the Australian parliament that is the most representative of women.

Ray Hollis has shown that he will make parliament more relevant and worth while to the people of Queensland. For this, amongst many other reasons, he is fully credentialled to be the Speaker of this House, and I nominate him accordingly.

**Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH** (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (10.47 a.m.): I have pleasure in seconding the motion moved by the Premier to appoint Ray Hollis as the Speaker of this parliament. The Speaker is probably one of the most difficult jobs in politics. I have seen a few come and go. Ray is the second member I have seen to start a third term as Speaker. Jim Fouras actually started his third term. I suppose he got to the end of it, but circumstances made it very short. But he did have three terms. They are the only two members I have seen who have served for that time. But I have seen a number of them, Mr Presiding Member, as you would know, in that role. It is one of the most difficult jobs in the parliament. As members, we can make the Speaker's job that much easier if we actually respect the position and the Chair.

This may come as a bit of a surprise to members, but in the 26 years that I have been here I have been warned under standing order 123A once and I have never been asked to leave the parliament—never. That is because I have always respected the Chair. If the Speaker has asked me to respect his rulings, I always have. I sat for 14 years in opposition. During that time I always did that.

I have seen the Speaker's job from both sides. Whenever the Speaker gives a ruling that favours the government, the opposition—irrespective of who it is—says that the Speaker is favouring the government and that he is doing the government's job. If the Speaker gives a ruling with which the government is not happy, irrespective of who the Speaker is the same thing goes: they think that the Speaker is being weak.

It is a very difficult job because you are never going to make everybody happy. As I said, I think that we can make the Speaker's job that much easier and we can make this parliament run a lot better if we do show respect for the Chair. When the Speaker or Acting Speakers ask us to bring ourselves to order we must ensure that we do in fact do that. I have sat here as a member of parliament for 26 years thinking, 'Boy, if I was there that bloke wouldn't be around.' I have always held the view that if we got rid of a few really quickly everyone else would shut up. No-one has ever tried it, but I think that would work because they would know that we were serious. When we warn them and warn them and warn them, they see how far they can take us. If the Speaker asks us to behave ourselves or warns us under standing order 123A, we should respect his ruling and bring ourselves to order. It is up to each and every one of us as members of parliament to do that.

The Premier mentioned Ray's role as Speaker and the way he has changed the way that things operate. The thing that he will look back on as one of his crowning glories would be the first parliament to have sat outside of Brisbane when we travelled to Townsville. It started out as being an experiment and ended up a great success—every member of the last parliament believed it was a great success. As a parliament we all committed ourselves to doing that each term. It was a great success. That is no small measure of the work that Ray and the staff of this parliament put into making sure that it was a great experience for us as members of parliament but a greater experience for the people of north Queensland. I am sure that the people of central Queensland will find the same thing next year because Ray will make sure that it does work.

I take great pleasure in seconding Ray Hollis's nomination as Speaker. I am certain that he will prove to be a great Speaker for this parliament.