



Speech by

## John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Wednesday, 8 June 2005

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### OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (6.11 pm): I am very happy to rise to support this motion. In doing so I would like to express my extreme regret that the Premier, with his ego-fondling majority and displaying yet another characteristic of an arrogant and out-of-touch government, has decided to throw in the rubbish bin another pillar of the parliamentary process to assure him a clear run through yet another crisis.

I honestly cannot see how one cannot support this motion. I have not heard any arguments this evening to say that recommendation 10 should not be taken for what it is, and that is an affirmation that there is a separation of the Office of the Speaker and the executive government. In respecting this, the Premier should not retrospectively approve travel for the Speaker. That is why the CMC did not accept the Premier's recommendation that he approve the travel. It struck a balance between independence and accountability.

Let us look at exactly what recommendation 10 is. The Speaker must outline the objectives of the visit. This is simply a matter of commonsense. As a matter of accountability and openness, it is fair that the Speaker, as the head of this parliament, be subject to the same rules that apply to any other member by justifying the expenditure of taxpayer funds on whatever trip he or she may be going on. It must include the program for the trip. This is so that the members of this House can make their own decisions about whether the Speaker's reasons for going on the trip are valid or not. This again means that every member of parliament is able to use their own judgment and raise, in whatever way they see fit, any grievances that they have with the trip. This provision implicitly underlines—and it has been said before—that the Speaker and the role of the Speaker is separate from the executive government, and that for his or her travel to be decided on by the Premier is an affront to the parliamentary process.

Another provision is that there is a draft agenda of the trip and that it details places that are likely to be visited and meetings that are likely to be attended. This is important so that the parliament knows what the Speaker is going to do in advance, and when a report of his travels comes back they know if the agenda that was set was followed. If the agenda was not followed a member can ask why it was not followed. This again shows that a Premier cannot retrospectively grant this because the very provision that the CMC is proposing is to ensure that members are notified as to what is going on with the travel arrangements prior to the trip and can reconcile that with the report after the trip. To do this retrospectively would not satisfy the intention of the CMC, which is to keep members of this House in the loop regarding the activities of the Speaker.

Another provision that underlines the intention to keep this House informed before and after the trip is the estimated cost. By seeing the estimated cost of a trip, as outlined in recommendation 10, members are able to reconcile that with the final cost of the trip, and that is the mechanism of accountability. The basic principle again, though, is that the members of this House are able to see the cost of the trip prior to and after the trip. Under such a recommendation the Premier would not be able to see the estimated cost of the trip prior to the trip and simply approve it after the fact. It is the intention of the recommendation to make sure that at all points in the travel process the mechanisms of accountability are maintained. This cannot be done by the Premier in a covert way by approving things after they have happened. Moreover, I

ask the Premier: if the trip was not just and correct, would he disapprove the trip retrospectively? I seriously doubt whether that will happen. I do not think that something such as the undercover nature of this arrangement has been contemplated.

All the Speaker had to do was receive a rubber stamp off the Premier. He did not even jump over this very low bar. The Liberal Party does not apologise for raising this bar, and it does not apologise for criticising the Speaker for not passing the existing incredibly low bar. Indeed, the Premier, in accordance with the intention of recommendation 10, is just like any other member of this House. That is, the Speaker is separate from executive government and the Premier, and the Premier is informed, as everyone else is, as to the movements of the Speaker. It is the Clerk of the Parliament, according to the basic pillars of this place, who should be the person to coordinate and approve such travel.

As members before me have said, the Premier is not the appropriate person to be saying 'correct weight' on the trips that the Speaker takes. The Speaker's role is quite detached from that of the Premier and the executive that he leads. Welding the two arms together is a move that turns its back on the Westminster tradition and is a short-term fix to another Beattie government stuff-up. Moreover, the way that the Premier has hidden this issue and ducked and dived around it and then decided to approve it retrospectively is deplorable. After this effort any attempt to say that he is open and accountable can be condemned as absolute rubbish. I commend this motion to the House.