



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Wednesday, 14 March 2007

PARLIAMENTARY DRESS CODE

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (9.36 pm): This week public perception of politicians sunk to new depths with the Premier pulling yet another stunt in lowering dress standards in the 52nd Parliament under the guise of saving water by running air conditioners in parliament at warmer temperatures. The Premier pulls these stunts on a daily basis to divert attention from issues of corruption and sleazy deals associated with his government, and the motive behind moving this motion without notice is obvious. If he was so concerned about saving water in the parliamentary precinct, why did it take until after the September 2006 election to install dual-flush toilets in the offices and bedrooms in the annexe? New sessional order 6 states—

Dress standards in the Parliamentary Chamber should be appropriate to the Queensland climate and reflect general community standards. All Members and staff are expected to dress in business attire. Male members and staff may wear a long sleeve shirt and tie or coat and long sleeve business shirt without tie.

Interestingly, there is no dress code mentioned for women either in this motion or in existing standing orders. A 2001 report of a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Study Group entitled *Gender-sensitising Commonwealth parliaments* noted that generally there is an absence of a dress code for women in most parliaments. Perhaps the Premier will bring in a new code for women at the next sitting.

Over the years Speakers in the Canberra House of Representatives have permitted alterations to dress codes. Some have proven to be mistakes, attracting humiliation. In 1977 it was acceptable to wear tailored safari suits without a tie. Thankfully, that dress code was changed in later years. I will never forget the ridiculous sight of South Australian Labor Premier Don Dunstan in his short pink hot pants.

Politicians are paid substantially high salaries compared to most Queenslanders. Parliament is recognised as an institution where formality rules and business dress, which is a coat and tie, and professional conduct are expected. Since the commencement of the 52nd Parliament led by the Beattie government behaviour in the House has been shameful. Derisive personal comments and insults are hurled across the chamber in a sloppy and dishonourable manner.

Ministers' replies to questions on notice contain sarcastic and unprofessional remarks to well-intended questions asked by members on behalf of constituents. I share those shoddy replies with residents in my electorate who have innocently requested answers to their concerns. They are not impressed with the unprofessional manner exhibited by ministers. Neither were a dozen guests from the Gold Coast who witnessed this morning's disgraceful antics by the Premier and his government during question time.

Correspondence is treated with disdain and arrogance by some ministers who take months to reply. A sampling of their tardiness includes a letter to the minister for transport dated 13 October 2006 which did not receive a response until 5 January. A letter to the minister for education dated 5 September 2006 was not answered until 4 December 2006. At least with a petition or a question on notice one gets a reply in 30 days, even though it may contain personal and shabby comments.

The relaxing of dress standards by the Premier has the potential to further diminish parliamentary standards. The emperor may have new clothes, but his motivation for doing so is transparently insincere.

Time expired.