



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Tuesday, 21 April 2009

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.55 am): It is my pleasure to nominate Michael James Horan, the member for Toowoomba South, as our candidate for Speaker. We all know that the Speaker plays a crucial role in our great democracy and that it is important that we all have a sense of impartiality and a deep respect for the standing orders. When I first came to this place the then Chairman of Committees, the honourable Jim Fouras, acknowledged that point when I was speaking with him one day. He helped me to appreciate the standing orders, which I have really come to know and respect.

The member for Toowoomba South is disciplined, dignified and honest. People expect that of our leaders. There are a lot of debates about politicians—what they are doing and how they are behaving. I believe that, since first coming to this place in 1991, the honourable member for Toowoomba South has shown through his personal actions that he embodies all of those principles and would bring many of those principles to the role of Speaker.

As many have mentioned, this is not a lecture theatre. As a former Leader of the Opposition the member for Callide said, it is not a classroom. Some members need to learn that when they come to this place, because I think sometimes they believe that because of the way parliament has changed over the years this is no longer a place for robust debate, but of course it is. The 89 electorates that have returned us here today expect to see robust debate, especially when we do not have an upper house. We need robust debate, and the Speaker's role is to make sure that, whilst parliament is conducted under the standing orders, there is robust debate and that it will be adversarial. The Speaker needs to walk a fine line between not favouring one side or the other. We believe that the member for Toowoomba South will do that, based on what he has done here since 1991.

The member for Toowoomba South has been a minister and a shadow minister. He was a minister in the Borbidge government—a health minister acknowledged for his work—and he has certainly been acknowledged for his work as the shadow minister for health in the lead-up to the 1995-96 era. He has also been Leader of the Opposition and he is well known throughout Queensland.

I have been to regional parliaments. When I am with the member for Toowoomba South—and the member for Gregory—I can walk anywhere in Queensland and see that average, everyday people know and respect him for what he has done in his career. He is like a referee who does not want to be the centre of attention. While this is not about playing a game, it is about serving in a role. We want someone to sit in that chair who will watch over things and ensure they are not the centre of attention.

The member for Toowoomba South has been a member of this House since 1991. He has a wide and varied history. He was general manager of the Toowoomba Showgrounds and has run agricultural shows, exhibitions, greyhound racing, speedway events, concerts and numerous expos. He has been a very active local member.

His wife, Helen, and he have been residents of Toowoomba for over 30 years. He has run a dairy farm near Gympie and before that was a rugby league player and player/coach. He has three children.

Most importantly, we know that he would undertake the role with a sense of humour. I think that is important. He has been a great mentor for many of us on this side of the House. Our society seems to believe that people over the age of 60 should move on, and that goes for members of this parliament as well. The member for Toowoomba South provides a great example of our need for seniority and mentoring, especially for new members. As I said, he does that with a sense of humour.

I note something he said in his maiden speech in 1991. He said, 'I look forward to working in this parliament in a statesman-like and fair manner.' I believe that all members would acknowledge that that is how the member for Toowoomba South has behaved. We are always happy for the government to take our ideas and we would be very happy for the government to take our ideas on this one. I have pleasure in nominating the member for Toowoomba South as Speaker.