



Speech by
Murray Watt

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Hansard Wednesday, 25 November 2009

**MOTION: CRIME AND MISCONDUCT COMMISSION INQUIRY;
GOVERNMENT GRANTS**

Mr WATT (Everton—ALP) (6.18 pm): I also rise to speak against the motion.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr WATT: It is always good to be welcomed by such close friends on the other side of the chamber. I also speak in favour of the amendment.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Stop the clock. I will wait for the House to come to order.

Mr WATT: The opposition's motion seeks the expansion of the current inquiry that it is being held to investigate all government grants where staff from a ministerial office have been involved. To me, all this motion reveals is how little the opposition knows about how government works and how unfit it still remains—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Stop the clock. I will wait for the House to come to order again.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have called for order, honourable member for Gregory. The honourable member for Everton.

Mr WATT: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. That is the second time I have called order, member for Lockyer. There will not be a third time. I will take action under the standing orders.

Mr WATT: Thank you, Mr Speaker. To respond to the opposition, my predecessor, the previous member for Everton, certainly did teach me a lot about good governance and integrity in government, something that, unfortunately, people on the other side of the parliament have yet to learn.

All this motion reveals is how little the opposition knows about how government works and how unfit it is to hold government. I can only assume that this is a reflection of how long the opposition has been out of government. The first point is that every day, every minister in this government and probably every government in the world approves grants—grants to schools, grants to community organisations, grants to businesses, grants to local governments and even grants to farmers. An important link in the chain leading to ministerial approval is the advice of ministerial staff. Therefore, by seeking a CMC inquiry into grants where ministerial staff are involved, the opposition is seeking an inquiry into the entire workings of government.

Indeed, the member for Moggill has claimed that there is a smell over every grant issued by the Queensland government. I wonder how the many hardworking community organisations that have slaved over grant applications and received government grants would feel about having their efforts impugned in this disgraceful way? Leaving that aside, given the number of grants issued and the involvement of

ministerial staff in the approval process, does the opposition have any idea how huge an inquiry into this subject would be? In the same breath, the opposition complains that the CMC is underresourced. The opposition really has no idea. It is so long since it has been in government, it has no understanding of how government works.

The second point is that right now the CMC has every right to investigate government grant processes and the involvement of ministerial staff. There is nothing stopping the CMC from launching such an inquiry if it so desires. It may well choose to do so at the end of its current inquiry and, if it does, the government will support it. There is a key difference between the CMC and the opposition on this subject. Unlike the opposition, the CMC requires evidence to launch an inquiry. As usual, tonight opposition contributions have involved much in smear and little in fact. They make repeated generalisations that there is a smell around the grants process in the Queensland government. The one thing that they do not do is make a complaint to the CMC, the body with the powers to investigate, because they do not have any complaint. They have no evidence. I say to the opposition again, 'If you have a complaint, take it to the CMC.'

I cannot fail to mention the supreme irony inherent in the LNP opposition calling for this inquiry and an inquiry into anything involving integrity in government. As I said yesterday in the debate on the Integrity Bill, I think the opposition's obsession with inquiries into government is due to its guilty conscience over the number of inquiries held into its actions when it was last in government. Who can forget the Fitzgerald inquiry's findings of deep corruption rife through the Queensland government led by Joh Bjelke-Petersen? One would think that the opposition—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr WATT: They get very touchy whenever one raises Joh Bjelke-Petersen. One would think that the opposition, and especially the former Liberals in the opposition, would be ashamed of that period in Queensland history. But, no! A number of members of the opposition have pledged their undying commitment to the values and policies of Joh Bjelke-Petersen—the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the member for Kawana to name but two.

Just before this debate began the Treasurer reminded me that it is ironic that we are debating this motion today, because today the *Courier-Mail* revealed that the next series of *Underbelly* will focus on the 1980s period of National Party government in Queensland. The *Courier-Mail* article stated that it is expected—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr WATT: Again, they are very touchy about the 1980s. The article speculated as to who would be in the cast of the miniseries. It suggested that Vince Colosimo could play Gerry Bellino and Gerry Connolly could play Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Of course, a number of other characters appear in that miniseries. Given the level of commitment to Joh Bjelke-Petersen by members of the opposition, there may even be roles for some of them. It is an obvious choice as to who would play the Leader of the Opposition. We will call David Hasselhoff and see what he is up to. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is a little bit harder to work out, but I reckon Sylvester Stallone could be tempted out of retirement. Members can make their own choice about whether that would be based on build or diction. The only choice for the member for Kawana is Macaulay Culkin—

(Time expired)