




Speech by

Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Tuesday, 15 May 2012

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.13 am): Madam Speaker, I join with the Honourable the Premier and others in this House to congratulate you on your appointment. I thank you for your opening address, and I confirm the cooperation of the opposition in the appropriate use of the standing and sessional orders during the 54th Parliament.

This is the first time since 1998 that an opposition has supported the government's nomination for this important position. The role of the Speaker in a Westminster parliament has a long and dignified history, dating back to the appointment of Sir Thomas Hungerford to the position in 1377. Until the 17th century, the Speaker was often an agent of the King. This meant that they were open to suffering the King's disdain when delivering news from parliament that the King was not likely to receive well.

The role of the Speaker has changed with historical developments but has today retained certain characteristics, powers and responsibilities. The most enduring of these are independence and dignity. The Speaker of the Queensland parliament, based on the position of the Speaker of the House of Commons, plays a very important role in the democratic life of this state. The Speaker's role in interpreting and applying the standing orders to proceedings in this House is crucial to the success or otherwise of the sittings of parliament, and I have every confidence that the member for Maroochydore will apply an impartial and respectful approach to her role.

Madam Speaker, I note that your election as Speaker of this House is also an historic one, it being the election of the first female Speaker of the Queensland parliament. Since 1929, when Irene Longman was the first woman to contest a seat at a Queensland election and was also the first woman elected to the Queensland parliament, women have slowly increased their representation in this parliament. The election of the first female Speaker is another important step in the long journey to equal representation over the years by women in the parliament.

Today is a unique day and one that you will always treasure. It is a great honour to be appointed Speaker of the Queensland parliament. You have served on numerous parliamentary committees, you have held numerous shadow ministerial posts, and you hold Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees. You are eminently qualified to hold this position.

Since your election in 1992, you have seen some very robust debate in this House. That is only to be expected in any parliament where members are passionate about the causes they support. This is the people's house, where we have the honour to represent the views of our constituents. Laws which are passed for the benefit of the people of Queensland need the utmost scrutiny in this chamber, and members of this House have a clear right to be heard.

We are fortunate to have a parliament here in Queensland where opposing ideas can be aired, differences explored and resolution reached wherever possible. That is why some robustness must be allowed in the debate. The role of the Speaker is to allow this debate within the confines of our standing and sessional orders, and I trust that the member for Maroochydore, because of her experience in this House, will achieve this.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Hon. John Mickel for his stewardship of this parliament during the past three years. His tenure as Speaker has coincided with some of the greatest changes to the operation of this parliament, and I take on board what the Deputy Premier has said: he was very well respected on both sides of the House. I believe that he was always fair and always reasonable, and I know that our new Speaker will do just as well as the former Speaker did. I note in the member for Maroochydore's first speech to this House she stated—

... I am here to work and to be a servant for my electorate.

She went on to state—

I look forward to working very hard to serve the people of my electorate without fear or favour and without deferring to people's political beliefs.

These characteristics, when brought to the role of Speaker, will define her as a fair, impartial adjudicator who will make decisions based solely on the standing orders and the merits of the argument and not in a politically partisan way. Never will these qualities be more important than in this 54th Queensland Parliament.

Madam Speaker, I know that through your family's long association with this place you have developed a strong interest in and appreciation of the history and traditions of this great House. This should stand you in good stead for maintaining the important traditions and conventions that have become an important part of the way this House operates. On behalf of the opposition, I congratulate you on securing the support of this parliament for the position that you now hold. I know that you will undertake your duties with the diligence and commitment that you have previously displayed in this House. Once again, congratulations and good luck. We look forward to working with you.