



Speech by


## Hon. Campbell Newman

MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE

Hansard Thursday, 17 May 2012

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### PARLIAMENT OF QUEENSLAND AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (11.11 pm), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contribution to the second reading debate. Before I make some detailed comments in response to the debate this evening, I make a point about the general thrust of the opposition's approach. I have seen this before over many years in the Brisbane City Council. I said earlier today that they have it in their DNA. There is a political strategy—perhaps it is a tactic, although a tactic is much smaller minded than a strategy, and we have probably seen some pretty small minds at work today. The point is this: they will try to frame the government in a certain way. Even though the government has not really done much yet—I acknowledge that; we have only been around for 7½ weeks—we are already arrogant and hubristic. These are the things that the Labor Party will say. Honourable members will have noticed the references to Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Somehow tree clearing is rampant already, the environment is being destroyed and we are rampaging across the land. Next we will be drilling the Great Barrier Reef! This is exactly what these people opposite will say. It is all spin. It is their political campaign. They sought to do it from 2008 to 2012 with their former opposition leader in the Brisbane City Council, Councillor Shayne Sutton. It did not work. We will not let them make it work because it is the normal spin and nonsense.

We heard the nonsense from the member for South Brisbane. We will hear a lot from that person because in the next few months—maybe six or 12 months—that person will probably be the Leader of the Opposition. It is clear that that is on the cards. The honourable member for South Brisbane clearly has the fire in the belly. After the most dishonest campaign in Australia's political history it is clear that the member for South Brisbane will do and say anything in the cause of gaining political power.

The urgent passage of this bill this evening is required so that the appointments to the parliament's portfolio committees can take effect, allowing them to commence undertaking their areas of responsibility in the 54th Parliament as expeditiously as possible. This is not an attempt to bypass the committee system, as has been suggested by the Leader of the Opposition. The committees are there; they exist. The numbers have changed. Maybe the opposition leader has not noticed, but the numbers in the chamber have changed.

The Leader of the Opposition raised a number of issues regarding accountability. I can assure the leader that this bill is about maintaining, and indeed strengthening, the committee structure by ensuring that the committees can operate effectively given the current representation in the House and the numbers that the Labor Party hold. This is not, as the Leader of the Opposition contends, an attempt to stack the committees with government members. However, I acknowledge that they know a bit about branch stacking; they have history. There was the Shepherdson inquiry, but they would have us forget that.

The fact of the matter is that the current legislative requirement that half of the members of the portfolio committee are to be nominated by the Leader of the House and the other half are to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition is unworkable in light of the composition of the parliament decided upon by the electors of Queensland at the 2012 election. Who said that? It was the Clerk of the Parliament. Is the Labor Party now saying that they do not respect the Clerk of the Parliament? Peter Beattie used to tell me

all the time how he held the Clerk of the Parliament in such high esteem. We received advice from the Clerk of the Parliament after this unprecedented election result and suddenly that advice is worth nothing. Shame on the Leader of the Opposition and the Labor Party for not respecting the views of the Clerk.

The Clerk has raised these concerns with the government and provided advice that a three-three composition of portfolio committees would not provide for a practical operation in this new parliament. The Clerk also recommended formulae to the government which would determine the make-up of the membership of portfolio committees depending upon the political composition of the Assembly, as I outlined in my explanatory speech. The government accepted the Clerk's advice on these matters. I am going to stop right there and again say that I did not dream this up. The Deputy Premier did not dream this up. The Treasurer did not dream this up. No-one else over here dreamed this up. It was done on the advice of the Clerk. Let us dispel this hocus-pocus, this smokescreen from the opposition; it came from the Clerk, not from us.

It should be noted that the actual split of six government members and two non-government members provides 25 per cent representation for non-government members. This is far higher than the 12 per cent representation that non-government members have in the Legislative Assembly as a whole. Ponder that.

The other point to make is that the members of the parliament, by leave, do not need to be members of a particular committee in order to participate in the activities of the committee or to question witnesses. This is provided for in standing order 209, and the member for Gympie told us all about that earlier. Perhaps the opposition was not listening. That is right: lots of words are coming out but not a lot is going in.

The Leader of the Opposition also raised an issue about the membership of the PCMC. The structure and membership of the PCMC is not actually a part of the bill. I acknowledge that in the tables at the back it is a consequential amendment but it is not part of this bill.

**Ms Palaszczuk:** Yes, it is.

**Mr NEWMAN:** I take the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition that it is. We will march off and we will go and get a lawyer to look at it and we will march it back in here. We will find out that the Leader of the Opposition, who was a minister for many years, clearly learned nothing during her time in the chamber as a minister.

The member for Mulgrave asked if the assistant ministers would receive an additional salary greater than that which they were receiving as parliamentary secretaries. I can confirm for the honourable member that there will be no change to their salaries, and this is outlined in clause 25 of the bill. I will stop right there. Clearly, they have not been reading it. They have had many hours to do so. There have been many hours of debate.

**Mr Bleijie:** It's 14 pages. It's a bit difficult!

**Mr NEWMAN:** No wonder we saw poor and reckless financial management for I do not know how many years. That is how we got a \$2.8 billion deficit—from people who could not even read the paperwork. We know that they did not ask the public servants how they were spending the money and let them off the leash.

**Mr Dowling:** Shame and still no apology.

**Mr NEWMAN:** And still no apology. I note the member for Gladstone's comments that the need for change to the composition of the portfolio committees is self-evident and also that a test to the integrity of the system will be the number of dissenting reports. I also note that the member for Gladstone has said that the Speaker's inclusion on the CLA as chairman goes some way to restoring the powers of the Speaker. However, I note that the member would like the Speaker to have a vote on all issues and call CLA meetings and set the agenda. The bill provides that the Speaker will operate as chairman, presiding over the CLA meetings as the Speaker does in the chamber. Consistent with this, the bill provides that the Manager of Government Business—he will always be the Leader of the House to me—will call the meetings and set the agenda just as the manager does in setting the sitting weeks and arranging the business of the parliament as a whole.

I also acknowledge the member's concerns about the CLA membership not including an Independent member, and I understand that the member wishes to move an amendment during consideration in detail to address this. I note that there are three opposition members on the CLA. It is within their discretion—it is within their discretion—to nominate any member, including a member who is not part of the government or the opposition, as their alternate on the committee. Let us think about this for a second. There are 78 of us, there are seven Labor members, there are two from the Katter Australian Party and two Independents and yet the Labor Party obviously believe that it is still okay that they have three members on the CLA to the government's three with the Speaker. If they really were fair, if they believed in democracy, if they believed in the CLA reflecting the balance of the numbers in this chamber,

then they would offer up one of their positions to either the Katter Australian Party or the Independents. So let us see what they do. Let us see where democracy goes this evening. Let us see.

I also note that all members will be able to write to or otherwise approach the Speaker as chairman and raise any matters that they wish the CLA to consider. In Westminster tradition, the Speaker represents all members. Do you know what, Mr Deputy Speaker? I know that the member for Maroochydore will be particularly faithful to that principle. That is why she is there in the chair. The government considers that the bill strikes the appropriate balance between restoring the dignity and prestige of the Speaker and also maintaining the integrity of the CLA as the principal bipartisan decision-making committee of the parliament. For these reasons the government will not be supporting the member for Gladstone's proposed amendments.

We know that the member for Dalrymple is also proposing to move amendments during consideration in detail to provide that the portfolio committee membership include a member who is neither government nor opposition, and I refer the member to my previous comments that the proposed membership is based upon the advice of the Clerk and the government accepts this advice.

In conclusion, I thank members for their contribution to the debate. I sadly have to reflect that the Labor Party have been all about spin as usual, not about substance—huffery and puffery, hocus-pocus, nothing whatsoever. As my former colleague Councillor Andrew Wines, the councillor for Enoggera, who was a visitor here this evening, commented to me, he said, 'Bigger chamber, more people, same Labor Party nonsense just from different people.' And that is so true, so true indeed. I commend the bill to the House.