




Speech by

Hon. Jeff Seeneey

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard Tuesday, 15 May 2012

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (10.55 am): Honourable members, in seconding the motion moved by the Premier and the nomination of the member for Maroochydhore for the high office of Speaker of this parliament, I want to reflect, as the Premier has done, on the role of the Speaker. It is often said that the role of the Speaker is the most important role in the parliament, but few of those who say it fully understand the implications of what they say. Having seen a number of Speakers serve in this parliament, I think I can say that whoever takes the chair of the Speaker of the parliament does more than just keep order in the House. Some of them do that better than others. Whoever takes the chair of Speaker of the parliament sets the tone, defines the character and sets the personality of the parliament. In a very real way, they establish whether or not this parliament can serve the purpose that it must in a real democracy. That purpose is often misrepresented.

Many people who come here make the comparison between this chamber and a school classroom or a university lecture theatre. Those who do that fail to understand the purpose of this parliamentary chamber. It is a place of challenge. It is a place of contest. It is a place where the government must come to be tested and it is the role of the opposition in the parliament to test the government. The extent to which that purpose can be served is, in a very real way, defined by the Speaker.

I know that the member for Maroochydhore has served in this parliament for 20 years under good Speakers and bad Speakers. Members who have served in this parliament for periods of time cite two names as illustrations of Speakers who have done a good job. Speaker Neil Turner is the most revered of the Speakers who have served in this parliament in recent times—and the member for Maroochydhore served in this parliament when Speaker Turner was in the chair. I know from my discussions with the member for Maroochydhore that she will use that experience as a good example. Equally, as the Premier has referred to, Speaker John Mickel, our most recent Speaker, is universally respected for the character that he brought to this parliament and the way he allowed this parliament to do its job and perform its role. Equally, there have been other Speakers in between those two whom I will not name but who, I will suggest, failed to understand the purpose of this parliament and failed to ensure that this parliament was able to perform its role. I will cite a couple of examples.

I well remember the day that my colleague the member for Southern Downs, who was then the opposition leader, was warned twice: once for yawning and once for laughing—not at the same time, mind you. It illustrated the level of absurdity to which the parliament had sunk. The second example I would cite is that unfortunate day when the member for Maroochydhore and I were both ejected from this parliament—quite unjustly—within a few minutes of each other because we chose to stand up for the communities of Queensland and resist the government's absurd attempts to amalgamate councils across Queensland. How right we have proven to be as communities still struggle with the fact that their heart and soul was torn from them by that legislation. We were ejected because the government could not withstand the pressure and the test that was the rightful use of this parliament.

So I know that the member for Maroochydhore will bring to the chair of this parliament those experiences and those examples, and she will ensure that the 54th Parliament—which is a little different from some of the others that I have served in—will also fulfil the role that the people who elected each and every one of us to this House expect it to. I have much pleasure in seconding the motion moved by the Premier and I have much pleasure in endorsing the nomination of the member for Maroochydhore for the position of Speaker in the 54th Queensland Parliament.