




Speech by

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MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

 **Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (3.34 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the report of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly. There are several observations that I wish to make on behalf of the Labor opposition. Obviously, a most disturbing aspect of the hearing into this committee was the overwhelming weight of questions that were allocated to members on the government side of the House.

As all members are aware—or at least they should be—the Queensland parliamentary committee system underwent a massive overhaul last year. This included a new approach to the estimates committee hearings, with time limits removed from questions and answers to allow a more free-flowing debate between the parliament and the executive on various topics, on various themes and issues. The previous government approached these changes in the appropriate spirit in 2011 and there was widespread recognition that the estimates process improved. I know it did improve, because I was the chair of an estimates committee.

We are all aware that the LNP government made some amendments to the Parliament of Queensland Act earlier this year. I remind the House that those changes were supposed to be a high priority. They were brought in on the very first full sitting day of this Newman LNP government and they were supposed to be more important than every election promise made by the LNP. The main change involved the LNP giving every member of its massive backbench a pay rise when, without any warning to the Queensland community, the government stacked the portfolio committees. It was the day that the Newman government first breached the trust of the people of Queensland. The government breached the trust of the people of Queensland and it is something that this government has continued to do with alarming regularity week in, week out, day in, day out. The people of Queensland are saying, 'Trust Newman? Can't do.' Stand up for Queensland? People are enrolling with the union movement by their hundreds day by day.

The LNP government has also made changes to the way in which the Committee of the Legislative Assembly would operate—changes that were, in fact, supported by the opposition. However, like so many things about this Newman LNP government, the devil was always in the detail. There it was, buried away, burrowed down. Some of the detail was revealed on 11 October 2012, the very first day of the estimates committee hearings. At the hearing into the Committee of the Legislative Assembly we found ourselves in a bizarre situation where literally any MP could turn up and be given equal opportunity to ask questions. In a parliament where the government comprises some 87 per cent of the members, this is literally bordering on the farcical. The estimates process is intended to be the one time of the year when the opposition has an opportunity to explore issues and interrogate the government about its proposed expenditure. Yet when it comes to the CLA, we are suddenly given some inane line like a 'once upon a time' fairytale that this committee is above partisan politics. If the CLA is apolitical, why was the opposition kicked out of this parliamentary precinct? If the CLA is above politics, why did the executive direct the Clerk to shift the opposition off site?

We have a half-baked argument from the Deputy Premier that we should be coming to the committee to ask questions as members of parliament, not as members of a political party. Let me remind the Deputy Premier and his boss that there was nothing bipartisan about the LNP's decision to stack the portfolio committees and give all the backbench a pay rise. There was nothing bipartisan about the LNP's decision to ignore the recommendations of its own chair of the PCMC and refuse to allow the Leader of the Opposition to nominate the chair of that most important committee. Shame on you! There was nothing bipartisan about the LNP's decision to kick the opposition out of Parliament House. It was a deliberate strategy against the democratic interests of all Queenslanders and it is a great shame in the democracy of this state.