



Speech by

**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

Hansard Thursday, 17 May 2012

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## **PARLIAMENT OF QUEENSLAND AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (11.03 pm): Among other things, the Parliament of Queensland and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2012 seeks to determine the size of the membership of the parliament's portfolio committees to reflect the new composition of the parliament and restore some of the former powers of the Speaker, which have been eroded over the past 20 years, by establishing the Speaker as chair of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly. I welcome a restoration of powers to this position. The role of Speaker must be above reproach and clear in its separation from the executive arm of government. However, a number of concerns were raised about aspects of the bill that do not reflect a healthy separation between the role of committees and the executive arm of parliament.

The March election handed the LNP a record majority. It also gave Katter's Australian Party over 12 per cent of Queensland's primary vote, making ours the third most significant political party in Queensland state politics. Recommendation 15 of the committee system review of 10 December, and supported by members of this government, forms the basis of the changes being proposed in this bill. It states that the composition of committees must 'reflect the composition of the non-government membership in the House'. Considering that Katter's Australian Party comprises 18 per cent of non-government members and represents one-third of a million Queenslanders, it is in the public interest that we should have a determining role in committee composition.

Clause 18 inserts new chapter 5. Division 2, section 91(2)(a) and (b) effectively denies Katter's Australian Party and the Independents the right to nominate members to the committees and is a blatant attempt by the government to dominate the committees to reflect the massive majority it enjoys in this House. The membership proposed by this legislation completely ignores the fact that there is a third political party and that the Independents and Katter's Australian Party make up over one-third of non-government members. This is not favourable to the integrity of the parliament or good governance.

The legislation has been rushed through as a matter of urgency. While it is important to get the work of government up and running, it is also important that we get this right. I do not believe that a committee system in which the number of government members is triple the number of non-government members and one-third of non-government members have no say in the committee composition is in the public interest or demonstrates an interest in accountability, particularly while this government is spruiking cutting waste and striving for accountability.