




Speech By  
**Annastacia Palaszczuk**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

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**PARLIAMENT OF QUEENSLAND AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.40 pm): As I indicated earlier when the Leader of the House moved the motion this morning, the opposition is in full support. In relation to the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill, the opposition will also be supporting the government in relation to this issue.

I think that the Attorney summed it up very well when he said that there are high expectations on members of parliament in this House. I made that point very clearly this morning when we looked at the motion of providing a medical certificate when there are absences from the House of more than four sitting days. What we have seen over recent months has been an abuse of process and an abuse of the rights and obligations of this House. It is something that no member of parliament should ever take for granted. To be elected to serve our constituencies and speak on issues relevant to this House is one of the highest honours in Queensland. Unfortunately, in recent times there has been one person in particular who has failed to turn up to this House to perform his duties.

As it states very clearly in the policy objective and the reasons for this bill, on 10 September 2013 the CLA tabled its report entitled *Absence from the House and vacating of seats by members*. The CLA's report notes the absence of the member for Redcliffe, Mr Scott Driscoll, from the sittings of the Assembly during 2013. It indicated that the government supports the CLA's recommendation, and to that I add that the opposition supports it, as the opposition supported the recommendations when they went to the CLA on a couple of occasions.

I do want to reiterate that in June of this year I wrote to Madam Speaker requesting that consideration be given to amending the standing orders in relation to the attendance in parliament of elected members of the Legislative Assembly. My letter stated that such amendments would set clearer parameters around the permitted absences of members, in line with the expectations upon all other persons whose salaries are paid by the taxpayers of Queensland. Let me make it very clear that openness and transparency should be the hallmark of representative democracy, and members should be required to explain protracted absences at the earliest opportunity.

Since the earliest stages of this debacle there has been a lack of leadership on the part of the Premier. If the Premier had acted decisively when questions were first raised about the member, we would not be in this position and we possibly would not be here having this debate.

During the member's protracted leave of absence, I believe—and I think other members of this House would concur—that the people of Redcliffe have not had an effective representative in this parliament. Recently the opposition conducted a town hall meeting in Redcliffe, and a number of people who turned up to that town hall meeting expressed to me their absolute disgust that (a) they had not seen the member for Redcliffe; and (b) the member for Redcliffe was not turning up to this chamber. He is not turning up to take his seat, which is what he was elected to do, and he is not turning up to do his job. People who take taxpayers' dollars should all be held to the same level of accountability. Imagine the public outcry if public servants went missing in action for months on end,

only turned up for duty in the dead of night for half an hour here or there and then disappeared again. It is simply not good enough; the community deserves more.

I also want to raise an issue in relation to how this situation arose. We know that Mr Driscoll was elected as an LNP member. We also know that in this parliament the Premier had full confidence in the member for Redcliffe, Mr Scott Driscoll. When the Deputy Leader of the Opposition asked the Premier, 'Does the Premier have full confidence in the member for Redcliffe?', the Premier responded, 'Yes, I do. I say again today that I have seen absolutely nothing to disqualify him from representing the people of Redcliffe'—

**Mr STEVENS:** I rise to a point of order. This bill is specifically about amending the legislation in relation to the number of sitting days that a member may be absent. It has nothing to do whatsoever about an individual member. I would ask that the Leader of the Opposition stop taking cheap political shots and return to the bill at hand.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Dr Robinson): Order! The Leader of the Opposition is by and large addressing the issues in the bill. I note in the reading of the bill itself that it actually mentions the matter of the member for Redcliffe and the explanatory notes mention the specific member. I am going to allow the Leader of the Opposition to continue.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I will just convey this to the Leader of the House so he is well aware. The explanatory notes say—

The CLA's report notes the absences of the Member for Redcliffe, Mr Scott Driscoll MP, from the sittings of the Assembly during 2013.

It is very clear. It is in black and white in the explanatory notes. The Premier expressed his full confidence in the member for Redcliffe. The Premier stood by the member for Redcliffe. The Premier supported the member for Redcliffe. He ran as an LNP member and then when it did not suit you, you cast him adrift. That is what happened. He was hand-picked by the Premier. The Premier said in this House, 'I have full confidence in the member for Redcliffe.' And then you found out! For weeks the opposition had been raising the issue. We had asked ministers questions. The ministers all stood by the member for Redcliffe, and then the going got rough. Then the member for Redcliffe was not turning up, and then you cast him adrift once you knew there might be a CMC investigation. Then you thought: We don't like that! We need to get rid of him! A little bird told me that at a party room meeting it was conveyed that you wanted the member for Redcliffe out of here by October-November. Is that what happened in your LNP party room? You want him out of this House! You want him sacked! You want him booted out! I say to the government: let the CMC do their job in relation to the member for Redcliffe. Do not be judge and jury; let them do their job.

As I have said, the opposition is supporting this. It is the right thing to do. The community deserves MPs who can actually perform their duties as members of parliament in this House. There is a member who has consistently failed to turn up and do that duty, and the people of Queensland deserve better.