




Speech By
Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Record of Proceedings, 17 October 2013

**MOTION: SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS; VACANCY IN SENATE OF
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.24 am): The opposition will be voting against the postponement of the filling of this casual vacancy until Thursday, 13 February 2014. The LNP government has had time now to get their house in order. It is now becoming not just a state embarrassment but a national embarrassment that Queensland will not have a senator fulfilling their role as a senator in the federal parliament until February next year. This is completely and utterly unacceptable.

We came into this House back in early September, on Thursday, 12 September, to consider this issue in detail. We were all summoned to parliament to make a decision on whether or not we would accept the nominee for the Senate vacancy and by convention of this House we would endorse the LNP's nominee. But that was sadly not to be the case because the Premier moved that it be deferred. Now we are under the impression, with this motion being put forward by the Leader of the House today, that it will be deferred further until Thursday, 13 February. That now means that some five months will pass until a Queenslanders can be endorsed to fill the casual vacancy. I do not think anyone in their right mind, any Queenslanders, would think that is acceptable.

The LNP has had time. If there is this dark cloud over their nominee, if there is this cloud surrounding a CMC investigation—and I understand that the person in question may be a relevant person, as the Premier has indicated by reports in the *Australian* just recently—the LNP has had time to choose someone else. Even as early as this week there were rumours and whispers around George Street that the LNP was considering another candidate. In fact, we were told it was going to be 'Senator Seeney' at one stage. That was the rumour that was going around George Street.

Government members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Ah, the Premier smiles! In fact, that has an interesting ring to it. 'Senator Seeney' almost rolls off the tongue, doesn't it? Madam Speaker, I digress.

This is a very serious issue. This is a vacancy in the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia. I am advised by reports recently that both houses of the federal parliament may be recalled to sit from 12 November to 14 November and then again in December. So that means that at those sittings, if the Senate is indeed recalled, Queenslanders will miss out. Queenslanders will not have a senator there to fulfil their obligations to represent Queensland.

Mr Pitt: They are very casual, very casual about the casual Senate vacancy.

Ms PALASZCZUK: They are very casual about the casual vacancy. I take that interjection from the Manager of Opposition Business. The LNP has had more than enough time to choose someone who is credible, who is well regarded and who could fulfil their responsibilities. If the person in question cannot fulfil their responsibilities, get rid of him. Find someone else. The right thing to do for

Queensland would be to find someone else who is acceptable and who can take up their seat in the federal parliament.

Today is a day when the Leader of the House has come in here and has said to the parliament, 'We are going to postpone this. We are going to postpone this until February.' What, in effect, the government is saying is, 'We don't care. We don't care that for the next five months Queensland is not represented in the Senate.' That is what they are saying to Queensland. That is exactly what they are saying: 'We don't give a damn.'

I have made my points very clearly. The opposition will be opposing the postponement. Let me make it very clear: the opposition will support a nominee put up by the LNP by virtue of the conventions of this House, but we will not support a postponement until February. Apparently they have 14,000 members but someone just left this morning so they are down to 13,999. Surely within those LNP ranks there is someone suitable—if not, then Deputy Premier, 'Senator Seeney'—to take up the position. This is a serious position. The Senate is a very important institution in the federal parliament. It demands respect, and we need to make sure that Queensland is represented.