




Speech By  
**Ray Stevens**

**MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH**

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**MOTION: DISSENT FROM DEPUTY SPEAKER'S RULING**

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (12.11 pm): It is very unfortunate that I was here in the House to bear witness to this unsavoury scenario which took place after dinner in the debate on the liquor bill. It is ill conceived, ill founded and without one iota of merit in terms of its very poor reflection on the office of the Speaker in this House. Whether it was the member for Broadwater who was the Deputy Speaker or whether it was the member for Rockhampton who was the Deputy Speaker, it is not about politics. It is not about what side a member comes from. It is about the Speaker's position in this House. That is so important to our Westminster system of democracy. It is so important to the dignity that we have in this House. We pride our reputations on the fact that we respect the Speaker as the umpire of what is fair and appropriate behaviour, what is debate according to the standing orders in this House and what is behaviour that is consistent with respectful behaviour to other members.

This dissent motion from the member for Condamine is clearly a reflection that the chair was incompetent in this particular declaration against the member for Condamine. I would say that on reading *Hansard* no-one would be in any doubt that the matters declared by the Deputy Speaker at the time to be personal reflections were personal reflections. She asked the Attorney-General, who was making the speech at the time, to withdraw those personal reflections which the Attorney-General did when they became personal.

**Mr HOPPER:** I rise to a point of order, Madam Speaker.

**Madam SPEAKER:** What is your point of order?

**Mr HOPPER:** The motion I moved was—

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! You cannot debate—

**Mr HOPPER:** Madam Speaker, the Manager of Government Business was clearly speaking about the page before in *Hansard*. The motion I moved is about the page after.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! Please take your seat. We will hear the Manager of Government Business.

**Mr STEVENS:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Clearly, this dissent motion is about the point of order raised by the member for Callide in being linked with incompetence.

**Mr Bleijie:** Condamine.

**Mr STEVENS:** Condamine, sorry. It is lucky he is not here. I quote from *Hansard*—

While we are on incompetence when we are talking about the member for Condamine ...

I got it right that time. After all his time in the House—he was elected in 2001, I believe—that was the time that the member for Condamine, if he was personally offended, should have taken a point of order on a personal reflection. He has been here for 12 years and he knows very well when he should take a point of order, as he did previously which was accepted by Madam Deputy Speaker and was quite clearly the right and proper ruling. I do not think there is any dispute from the member about that. I again quote from *Hansard*—

... and the member for Gaven, honourable members may not have seen the member for Gaven, a member of PUP, getting advice from the opposition leader's adviser on this bill.

It may well be that the member for Gaven could have taken personal exception to those matters then, but he did not and the conversation continued—

Have we got an opposition or have we got a concoction of incompetents—

it is not personal; concoction means more than one incompetent—

that cannot work out what is going on?

**Dr DOUGLAS:** Madam Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take offence to those comments made by the Manager of Government Business and I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr Bleijie:** He is quoting me.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! The member is quoting *Hansard*. That is a direct quote from *Hansard*. I am reading the *Hansard* before me and I can confirm it is a direct quote from the *Hansard*. I call the Manager of Government Business.

**Mr STEVENS:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is amazing to see that the members have finally woken up—they were in the House at the time—to the fact that there may have been a personal reflection when incompetence was mentioned. I again quote the *Hansard*—

Have we got an opposition or have we got a concoction of incompetents that cannot work out what is going on? They cannot read five words in a clause of a bill.

It is 'they' as a group rather than a personal reflection. Quite clearly, under the standing orders there was no capacity whatsoever for the member for Condamine to take a point of order. The fact that he did so led to other unsavoury matters which eventually moved to his expulsion from the parliamentary precinct for seven consecutive days. That was a very unfortunate event not related to the particular motion which we are debating here today.

What we are debating here today is the ruling of the Deputy Speaker at the time who has done an excellent job in learning her role as Deputy Speaker. I congratulate the member for Broadwater on what I believe has been a wonderful commitment to learning the Speaker's role and on doing a great job. By the way, the Clerk of the Parliament was sitting on her right-hand side and Speakers normally take advice from the Clerk and the officers of the Clerk. The Deputy Speaker in her learning role had every capacity to go forward and make a correct decision. What we have here in this dissent motion is the unfortunate result of a member trying to justify his unjustifiable position in relation to a debate that we had on a particular issue which went much further and was much more animated than it should ever have been. We have all seen rants in this House from members on both sides.

**Ms Palaszczuk:** Speak for yourself.

**Mr STEVENS:** I can quote some good ones if I need to, Leader of the Opposition. But what we have is an independent adjudicator on the matter, and that is the Speaker of this parliament. Madam Speaker, I find it a great affront to the position of Speaker that this dissent motion in all its worthlessness is being put before this House to reflect poorly on one of the great groups of deputy speakers that we have and that you are overseeing to make sure that we have people competent in future times to make sure the behaviour in this parliament is of the nature of and in accordance with what is expected by the electors who put us in here.

We all understand the theatre of parliament. We have all ramped up certain performances to equate with the necessity of the moment in terms of the passion involved with a particular debate. But what those of us who are concerned with the reputation and the ongoing respect for the parliament do not do is take into question the rulings of the Speaker. Whether it is Madam Speaker in the chair or her representatives, this side should have and will have respect for that position. Personally, I take great heart when I am warned by Madam Speaker. I feel very naughty. Some others work the system a little bit stronger than I do and will take it further down the track. However, to maintain the grace and dignity of this precinct at all times we need to make sure we respect the Speaker. This motion is 100 per cent about the Speaker. We are not going to put up with petulant rhetoric in any shape or form from any member in this House.

**Ms Palaszczuk** interjected.

**Mr STEVENS:** I see the Leader of the Opposition is very animated in her speech. I hope that the opposition joins with the government in opposing this motion against the Deputy Speaker, which is the Speaker's representative, and maintaining the propriety and dignity of this office against inappropriate questioning of the Speaker's decision. If this is not upheld we will see a precedent created and we will see behaviour that is not becoming of parliamentary representatives. We cannot allow this motion to proceed.