



Speech By **Hon. Annastacia Palaszczuk**

MEMBER FOR INALA

Record of Proceedings, 11 February 2014

VACANCY IN SENATE OF COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Election of Senator

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.33 pm): I rise to speak on the debate on the nomination of the candidate to fill the Senate vacancy caused by the resignation from the Senate of Senator Barnaby Joyce. This debate was originally scheduled for 17 October last year. The former senator resigned from the Senate on 8 August, and the Speaker was notified of this by the Governor on 15 August. In fact, Barnaby Joyce was preselected for the New South Wales seat of New England on 13 April 2013. Basically, since 13 April last year we have known of the need to choose a new senator, and it has taken until 11 February this year for the parliament to be given the opportunity to debate this issue.

Since 15 August last year, when the Speaker was advised of the senator's resignation, this will be the 27th day that the Senate has sat without a replacement senator for Senator Joyce. For 27 sitting days the Queensland parliament has allowed Queenslanders to have inadequate representation in the Senate. Queenslanders who needed someone to go to for assistance had fewer senators available to help them out. But that should not surprise anyone in this House: they have form for that. How long have they left the people of Redcliffe without representation? The member for Redcliffe resigned on 19 November—

Government members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is completely relevant. Senator Joyce served the people of Queensland in the Senate of the Commonwealth parliament from 2004 until his recent resignation. The former Senator Joyce, who once so proudly wore a Queensland State of Origin jersey to prove his Queensland credentials, has abandoned the people of Queensland to fulfil his own political ambitions south of the border. This is the same Barnaby Joyce who, in his first speech in the Senate, said:

To the people of Queensland, I am your senator and your servant.

He then said:

For all Queenslanders who are here for the first time, you might be surprised to know that the colour scheme was once blue in this chamber but we have since had it changed to maroon and I hope you are happy with that result.

In accordance with the conventions of our federal system of government and, since the commencement of the Constitution Alteration (Senate Casual Vacancies) Act 1977, in accordance with the Constitution, the person to fill the vacancy caused by Senator Joyce's resignation should come from the same political party. The opposition respects the conventions of our Westminster system and therefore will not be opposing the nomination of Mr Barry O'Sullivan to fill the casual Senate vacancy. This is, of course, in stark contrast to the position taken in this very House by the former Premier, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who took the unusual step in 1975—

Government members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: They do not want to hear it! This is in stark contrast to the position taken in this very House by the former premier Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who took the unusual step in 1975 of refusing to accept the Labor Party's nominee to fill the Senate vacancy—

Government members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The history books reveal it! As I have said, the opposition will not be opposing Mr O'Sullivan's nomination. When I ask myself what other characteristics people look for in a good politician, I come up with a number of qualities: honesty, integrity, compassion, humility and honour. Maybe we can throw in dignity and grace as well for good measure, for Mr O'Sullivan is of course an honourable man. In choosing Mr O'Sullivan as the Senate candidate, this was no doubt recognised by the LNP state council. In the infamous words of Mark Anthony in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar 'So are they all, all honourable men'. It appears that when the LNP looked amongst their ranks, the best person that they could come up with to fit the bill was Barry O'Sullivan. In fact, when choosing the likely senator the LNP had 12 nominations. I have examined the list and, politics aside, there were some very worthy candidates amongst them. However, the LNP in its wisdom have determined that their former treasurer, Barry O'Sullivan, is the best possessed of the qualities that will enable him to make a fine representative for the people of Queensland in the Senate.

Might I say that there is one significant disappointment for me in the nomination of Barry O'Sullivan for this vacancy, and that is that the LNP did not choose a woman to replace Barnaby Joyce. In the context of the retirement of Sue Boyce, who did not contest last year's election, the only woman senator from the LNP since 1984 to represent Queensland has now gone. By running women in the unwinnable fifth and sixth spots on their ticket at the election, the LNP ensured there will not be another female LNP senator before 2017. But if the LNP can honestly tell us, the people of Queensland, that the best person they have to represent us in the Senate is Barry O'Sullivan, we will not stand in their way.