




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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MOTION: ESTIMATES HEARINGS

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (3.46 pm): Firstly, we have heard a few things today from the Leader of the House and I just want to go through some of them in a bit more detail. The Leader of the House can keep telling himself that this is about openness and transparency, but it is anything but. It is all about smoke and mirrors. We know that the government at the very last minute, on the hop—they do everything on the hop—have now said that this is going to be a one-year trial. Why? Because they are already getting the message that it is not going to be popular. They are already getting the message that this is not the appropriate way to do it. They are trying to dress this up as having more time to scrutinise the government when in fact it is anything but that. We know that they want to have bad news over only two days rather than over two weeks. That is the crux of this motion.

Government members interjected.

Mr PITT: I was going to make only a brief contribution, but I might make a longer one based on some of those comments. I fully support the opposition leader and the member for Gladstone in opposing this motion. This is about curtailing scrutiny of the government. Estimates are the bedrock of scrutinising the executive here in Queensland. It has been so since the mid-1990s. There have been changes along the way but everyone in this House should be aware that those changes have always been done in a bipartisan manner. There is nothing bipartisan about the way the government is approaching this issue. They have not asked anyone. But that is why they are known as the know-it-all Newman government. They do not ask anybody any questions that they think they will not like the answer to.

So what we know is that former governments of all stripes have seen estimates as an opportunity to communicate both their achievements as a government and, of course, an opportunity for the opposition and non-government members to scrutinise what is happening in the very important bills before the House regarding our budget. This is a critical time. I do not even think the Leader of the House believes his own words today. I do not believe that he can say that this is about openness and transparency. It is about overhauling the estimates committee process in a way that we have not seen in this parliament before.

Estimates are an important time for the parliament to grill the ministers. As we know, over the last two years we have seen the government flounder badly. They have been absolutely flogged at estimates. They have lost ministers. We have seen how this works.

Mr Stevens: You're kidding, aren't you?

Mr PITT: Let's have a look at some of the performances. Let's have a look at the performances of the Attorney-General, the Minister for Health, the Minister for Tourism and then there are the ministers who are no longer with us—the ones who have got the chop. Why? Because they were not across their portfolios or they made very poor decisions which were outed by this opposition and by other non-government members.

To those in the gallery—to the fourth estate—this is the real trick: this is about minimising media scrutiny. That is all it is about. All these committee hearings happening at the same time—concurrent hearings—makes it difficult. Broadcasting will be difficult. There may not even be video facilities available in all seven committee rooms. We may only see that in five; there may be only audio in the other two. But I am not sure they have even thought that far ahead, because this is about minimising their damage and not thinking about democracy in Queensland.

Mr Seeneey: You cannot broadcast video from the estimates committee hearings anyway. They only do overlay. Where have you been?

Mr PITT: I was going to say that the Deputy Premier had been awfully quiet, which is such a change because he seemed very keen to talk about this to the newspaper. Shamefully, I have had to rise on a matter of privilege in this House and write to the Acting Speaker about the potential contempt of committee proceedings. What was the Deputy Premier's response when this was raised with him? When this was raised with him in the House earlier this morning, the Deputy Premier's response was, 'You've got to be kidding.' He was trivialising the importance of what he has done. The real test will be to see whether this is defensible. I will be writing to the Acting Speaker on that matter.

Maybe the Deputy Premier should have taken a leaf out of the book of his alter ego, the fake Jeff Seeneey—Sir Fake Jeff Seeneey now that imperial honours have come back. What did he say on Twitter? He said, 'New rule for shorter estimates hearing this year. If the entire hearing cannot fit into a 140-character tweet, it's too long.' That is basically where this is pitched at. That might seem like a joke but that is the way they are pitching this. They can get away with this because of their massive majority.

Queenslanders are tired of this arrogant government. They are tired of this government saying they know it all and they think they can run roughshod over the parliament and Queenslanders. They treat people like speed bumps. They are happy to roll over the top of them. They do not want scrutiny because they know every time scrutiny is applied to them they do not like it. Guess what, the skeletons come out of the closet. I have heard that we may well get an extra sitting week out of this. That surprises me because every time we come into this place we belt them. We belt these people.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr PITT: We belt you. You come away with a bad news story every week.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. When I stand on my feet I expect silence.

Mr PITT: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr Bleijie: Get me an icepack. I'm bruised. This mean opposition.

Mr PITT: I take that interjection from the Attorney-General, because at the moment he would be feeling very bruised. His ego is bruised and professionally he is bruised. His reputation is in tatters; it is not bruised. He is not having a good week. In fact, I do not think he has had a good month. Why do they not like this? The Leader of the Opposition touched on it. She said they do not like it because this came out of a recommendation from Tony Fitzgerald. It came out of the EARC process. It came from having to undo more than 30 years of National Party rule in this state which was destroying Queensland. It was corrupt. It was rotten to the core. Campbell Newman does not have to worry about people comparing him to Sir Joh, because he is living up to it every single day.

Before this motion that has been put forward we used to have one committee sitting at a time. Let us reflect on that. One committee at a time means that all eyes are on that minister. It means all eyes are on the questions being asked and that is obviously too much pressure. These ministers know that if they have to go through another estimates committee scrutiny under the old format they will crack. They know they have non-performers and they know that they have been losing people each and every year. They have had a scandal each and every year for the last two years under the scrutiny being applied not only by the opposition but by all non-government members. What I cannot understand is how can eight people in the Labor opposition be giving you so much curry? How can these eight people be dismantling your government and ruining your plans?

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The member will direct his comments through the chair.

Mr PITT: That is what is happening. It is all falling apart. We know the Treasurer did not have a plan before the election when it came to paying down debt with asset sales. That is smoke and mirrors and that is coming out. This government has to take a really hard look at itself if it wants to stop this slide—and it is a slide. It will have to remember what happened in Redcliffe. It will have to remember the historic swing. It will have to live up to the words of the Premier when he said: we will

listen and we have learnt a lesson. They have learnt nothing. Today's motion is evidence that they have learnt nothing. I was going to say that this is all about winding back. Guess what: the opposition will give a commitment today that we will wind back these changes when we return to government because this is not the way to run a parliamentary democracy in this state.