




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

Record of Proceedings, 27 August 2014

MOTION

Dissent from Deputy Speaker's Ruling

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (3.46 pm): I rise to speak against the dissent motion moved by the member for South Brisbane and present not only my view, but also the view of the government in relation to this dissent motion against the ruling of Deputy Speaker Berry on 6 August 2014. May I say from the outset that I thank the member for South Brisbane for bringing this to the attention of the House in that it is an area that will be well clarified by the decision of this House today. However, allowing for the fact that the member for South Brisbane is, in parliamentary terms, a two-year novice in this House, rather than a direct dissent motion on the chair—and I would remind the member for South Brisbane that the Deputy Speakers in the chair have all the rights, privileges and entitlements of you, Madam Speaker, as your representatives in that chair—it would have been much better for the member for South Brisbane to put her view on this particular area that may be in question in her mind to Madam Speaker by the appropriate channels, which would have been writing to Madam Speaker rather than a motion of dissent, which is a clear reflection on the chair's capacity and powers in the House.

The ruling arose from an exchange during the debate of the appropriation bills where the minister mentioned the absence of the member for South Brisbane from the estimates committee hearing. The member for South Brisbane made points of order about reflections on a member's absence from a parliamentary committee, that such references were not in keeping with the traditions and customs of the House and were inconsistent with standing orders. We can assure the member for South Brisbane that there is no standing order in relation to the mentioning of absence from parliamentary committees. The Deputy Speaker then overruled the point of order and when asked for a ruling on the matter by the member for South Brisbane replied that he had made a ruling and that was that the objections were overruled.

As members are aware, previous Speakers, including, of course, yourself, Madam Speaker, on 29 May 2012, the former Speaker Mickel, on 3 June 2009 and Speaker Mickel again on 19 August 2001, have made clear directions in relation to the mentioning of absences in this House.

As you would be aware, Madam Speaker, there has been no precedent for matters of absences in parliamentary committees not to be mentioned and no Speaker has referred to those matters. As per these rules, there are many reasons why members may be absent from this chamber, including both personal matters and matters relating to their responsibilities. All previous rulings have only been made relating to absences from the chamber and not from committee proceedings, so there is no standing practice in this regard. Further, the standing orders are silent on the matter and do not contain any procedures or rules about mentioning absences from the chamber of members in any regard, whether it be from the chamber or from a committee proceeding.

By their nature and intent, Speaker's rulings are drafted in such a way as to be clear and unambiguous, as the consequences for breaching Speaker's rulings can be significant. Therefore, it is wrong to presume, as the member for South Brisbane appears to have done, that these rulings have

also applied to committee proceedings as well as absences from the chamber. In her own speech in *Hansard*, the member for South Brisbane refers to 'my understanding'. However, we do not question Madam Speaker or her representatives on the basis of gossip, street corner tips or understandings that may or may not be correct. Obviously, we defer to her very important role in this House of keeping order and maintaining the respect and dignity that must be shown to the Chair and her representatives. Therefore, it is wrong for the member for South Brisbane to move this motion of dissent on Deputy Speaker Berry's ruling on 6 August. For these reasons, the government and I stand in support of the ruling made by Deputy Speaker Berry.