




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Record of Proceedings, 5 May 2015

MOTION: STANDING RULES AND ORDERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (6.16 pm): As we all know, the former process of voting saw members physically move to either the right-hand or the left-hand side of the Speaker in the chamber following a division being called, depending on whether they agreed or disagreed with the question being put to the House. Members voting aye would move to the Speaker's right, while members voting no would move to the Speaker's left. The Whip and Deputy Whip of each party would then act as tellers and count each individual member of parliament on their respective side of the chamber. I have done the roll myself.

This procedure proved to be a time-consuming process, with an average of seven minutes spent on each division during 2012-13. For that period the longest time taken in a single division was 17 minutes. In the 2012 parliamentary year almost 14 hours was spent during the division process, representing over four per cent of the total sitting time that year. These changes, as outlined by the member for Southern Downs, were introduced last term under an LNP government and adopted for the long-term benefit of parliament to assist with its smoother operation. I was on the CLA, and I know that there was robust discussion about this new voting concept. Political parties should not be seeking to change the voting system or procedures on a political whim, yet here we are a year later being asked to change it based on purely political motives.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Lockyer, I do not intend to continue to warn members. I have already indicated that I am considering standing order 253A, which, if I choose to act on it, will have a significant impact on people voting in this matter, so I would urge you to control yourself. I call the Treasurer.

Mr PITT: Much to the delight of the member for Mermaid Beach, I have to say that I am converted. The system has worked and there is no need to change it, so you should be very happy that your arguments and points of persuasion have been so strong. It may have taken me a little bit longer, but a year later I think we are on a winner.

The opposition stands for nothing. You would not see any better example of 'clinging to power' than when they dropped their asset sales plan a couple of days after the election. The whole foundation of the economic plan that they took to the election and spent \$70 million of taxpayers' money on—and they were prepared to spend \$270 million—was that there was only one choice. They only had one plan, and then they jettisoned that plan and now they have no plan. This House needs to recognise this stunt for what it is: a stunt. This is another grasp for power by the member for Southern Downs, who has been rejected as Premier three times by the voting public. The opposition leader, who has been rejected three times, now wishes to perform a monumental backflip and change parliamentary voting procedures.

But members should not take my word on the merits of this system. As I said, the member for Mermaid Beach was a strong champion of this. He stated—

We have been evolving the voting system of this parliament for quite some time. It was of concern that we lost almost two days of parliament out of a 42-day sitting year on the divisions within this parliament. That is why we moved to a new system that is part of this government's resolve to provide a better treatment of legislation, in this case, a better outcome.

The opposition has now been reduced to doing a complete backflip on what they argued 12 months ago was a better outcome. The member for Mermaid Beach has had more to say on this, of course, because the former government never missed a chance to take a cheap shot. He said during that debate—

I hear some clamouring down the back in relation to, 'I want to stand up and be famous!' 'I want to be counted!' 'I want to be seen!' 'I want to be relevant!' That is all about self-indulgence and self-importance—

When the former leader of the House was saying this, I guess he was not really thinking about how aptly he would have been describing his own party's actions less than a year later.

The current voting system—which was meant to last in this parliament and go on for years and years to come, according to the former leader of the House—is not a political plaything. The former leader of the House went on to say—

I think most members would agree that the new voting system in this parliament has been very effective. I think it has been a great step forward.

But this opposition leader has shown little regard for due process, his recent attempt to become an unelected caretaker premier being a particularly unedifying example of his unrestrained desire for the top job—followed up recently by distributing the confidential details of children to the media. Now he wants to restrict MPs' rights to vote. You would think the father of the House would have more respect for parliamentary democracy than clutching at straws, attempting to shift the goalposts of Westminster tradition. I urge the House to reject the attempts by the member for Southern Downs to subvert our democracy. Members of parliament are elected to represent their constituents' views in this people's house. The Leader of the Opposition should stop flip-flopping.

In early 2003 the Victorian Legislative Assembly trialled a voting system similar to that which was brought into this parliament last year. It remains the basis of that assembly's procedures. Parliamentary voting practices are not subject to change to suit the political climate of the day. The House should reject the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition and maintain the current voting system. I know that the member for Mermaid Beach will speak next and I know that he will have a lot to say, but I will say yet again: I am a convert.