




Speech By
John-Paul Langbroek
MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2015

MOTION: SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.11 pm): The suspension of standing and sessional orders needs to be supported so that this House can deal with an issue that the government has failed to deal with. There is no better example of the hypocrisy of those opposite than to have heard the contribution by the minister, the member for Rockhampton, because he sat in this House in the 54th Parliament and voted against the changes that this motion is seeking to overturn. He showed hypocrisy today talking about other extraneous matters. This government is really only full of self-interest and self-preservation, which proves that that is the driving force behind the motivations of this government. The minister is more interested in talking about other matters whilst at the same time this government does not even want to come to parliament and sit in the parliament.

Let us look at the matters that have arisen since that debate on 5 May. On 30 March this year, in response to the revelations at the time about the member for Cook, the Premier said that she was willing to put her premiership on the line, yet here we are some 6½ months later and despite the tough talk and the strong rhetoric at the time that is all it was. The member for Cook's voting record shows that he is still a de facto member of the Labor Party and this government and the Premier still rely on his vote to retain stewardship of the treasury benches. The reason this House needs to deal with this issue is all about standards. It is because we should take a stand about the behaviour of members of this parliament in the community. We have committees of this parliament to ensure that the ethics of members are upheld. You yourself, Mr Speaker, had some strong comments to say about the allegations about the member for Cook on 30 March this year when you said—

My view is very clear. Mr Gordon should resign for the good of Queensland, for the good of his electorate, for the good of himself and especially for our parliament so the parliament is able to focus on the business before it without any distractions.

You have also been a strong advocate, Mr Speaker, about the need for members of this parliament to maintain high standards—something the community expects. We also surely have a moral obligation to take a stand and show the people of Queensland that the constant speculation and allegations of poor behaviour by the member for Cook have continued to dog this parliament and this government. Every vote that this government accepts from the member for Cook is tarnished with the allegations that continue to dog him. That is not good enough. In a week when we are dealing with important issues of domestic and family violence which deal with societal attitudes about women and the treatment of women in our community, it is incumbent on us as a parliament to send a message that the kind of behaviour we have seen reported is not good enough.

Let us not kid ourselves: this is a matter of the political survival of this government. The vote tonight will be a true test of the leadership of the Premier. If she is truly willing to put her premiership on the line, if she truly finds the behaviour of the member for Cook unacceptable, if the Deputy Premier truly finds the behaviour of the member for Cook disgusting, then they should vote with the LNP tonight and suspend the standing and sessional orders so that they do not need to rely on the vote of the

member for Cook to pass legislation and indeed command the confidence of the parliament. Every member of the parliament has a right to vote in this House and represent the community. That is not the issue here. The issue is the reliance of this government to command the confidence of the parliament and pass legislation in this House and in doing so happily accept the vote of the member for Cook.

This is as much about the government's actions as it is about the actions of the member for Cook, and the Premier has failed this test of her leadership time after time. The Premier can go missing, the Premier can get other ministers to do media conferences, the Premier can go on holidays during estimates hearings and the Premier can dodge answering questions in this parliament, but the issue is clearly not going away and the people of Queensland expect something to be done. In a hung parliament nullifying the vote of the member for Cook is a statement of an ethical position which both sides should be able to do, just as they did in the federal parliament with Craig Thomson. The true hypocrites in this debate are those members opposite in the government who will say one thing out in the media and then come in here and do the exact opposite.

The Premier took out a full-page ad in the *Cairns Post* earlier this year stating that the member for Cook was not a suitable person for parliament. Hollow words, Premier. The allegations keep mounting. The people of Cook are becoming tired of the constant speculation about the local representative and the Premier has failed her own test of leadership. Tonight we heard from the Leader of the Opposition that the Yarrabah Mayor, Errol Neal, and the Kowanyama Mayor, Rob Holness, have said that the scandal was shameful and embarrassing. There has been allegation after allegation and the Premier is more than happy to continue to take the vote of the member for Cook. This Labor government is typified by what the former Labor premier Jack Lang said to a young Paul Keating: 'Always back the horse named self-interest, son. It'll be the only one trying.'