




Speech By
Peter Russo

MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK

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MOTION

Portfolio Committees, Reporting Dates

 **Mr RUSSO** (Sunnybank—ALP) (6.26 pm): I rise to support the amendment moved by the Leader of the House. This motion moved by the opposition is quite extraordinary. I will be addressing the second aspect of the motion relating to the meeting times for parliamentary committees. The Leader of the House has moved an amendment to the motion to provide that parliamentary committees meet at a time most suitable to conduct their inquiries, noting that the committees other than the portfolio committees have regularly met at times other than Wednesday morning. This is a fact.

Since the review of the parliament committee system in 2010 it has been the practice and convention that portfolio committees meet where possible on Wednesday morning. There are of course other times that it is necessary for the committees to meet, but that is the standard meeting time for those committees. The other parliamentary committees have had other practices since that time. The standard is that they do not meet on Wednesday morning, which is set aside for portfolio committees to meet.

Let us look at the CLA. The general practice throughout the last parliament was that the CLA met at 4 pm on the Tuesday of a sitting week. The Ethics Committee would usually meet at lunchtime on a Thursday but often met at other times—never or rarely, if ever, on a Wednesday morning. The PCMC and then the PCCC met usually on Friday morning, again not on Wednesday morning. So this recent conversion of the member for Callide to the view that all committees should meet on Wednesday morning is exactly that—a recent conversion.

But Wednesday morning is not suitable for all committees to meet. There are quite a few reasons for this, and the member for Callide well knows this. The first is that the members of most of the parliamentary committees are also members of portfolio committees. If they meet at the same time, those members would not be able to attend both their portfolio committee and their other parliamentary committee. Indeed, standing order 198(3) provides that meetings other than the first meeting of a committee shall be set by the committee or may be called with notice by the chairperson or their delegate. This is the reasonable, common-sense and democratic way for committees to conduct their business. Mr Speaker, as you would know, it is simply not practical for all committees to meet at 9 am on Wednesday of each sitting week.

The member for Callide has a real hide calling for this change. He is a member of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee and as such would have a vote on when that committee is to regularly meet. It seems from this motion that he may not be happy with the democratic decision of that committee to determine its own meeting time and has attempted to run roughshod over the committee process. That is a tactic he regularly took in the previous parliament, but it is not one that he will get away with in this parliament.

Another reason it is preferable for non-portfolio parliamentary committees to meet on days other than on Wednesday morning is that there are a limited number of committee rooms and rooms suitable for the holding of committee meetings. The committee rooms here in parliament were set up when the previous government removed the previous opposition from the parliamentary precinct and sent them packing up the road to Mineral House. They then converted the vacant opposition offices into committee rooms. From the statements that have been reported in the media and attributed to the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Southern Downs, about the premises they now occupy, I think that might be a decision they now regret.

The difficulty is that there are not enough rooms for more committees to meet on Wednesday morning. There are insufficient Hansard reporters, recording equipment and other resources to allow for all committees to meet simultaneously on Wednesday mornings of sitting weeks. But we all know this is really just about the member for Callide and his membership of the PCCC—and not out of any new-found concern for parliamentary process or profound regard for integrity and accountability. Rather, we all know that the PCCC meets on Monday mornings and that the member does not want to have to travel to Brisbane early to attend these meetings. If he is trying to suggest—

(Time expired)