



Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 17 February 2016

MOTION: AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (5.59 pm): I move—

- (1) That the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly be amended by inserting in standing order 213, after (2), the following sub-paragraph:
- (2A) A draft report of the Chairperson or another member to be tabled at a committee meeting in accordance with (1) or (2) above, must be provided to members of the Committee at least 2 clear days prior to any meeting at which the draft report is to be considered in accordance with (3) below. A draft report may be provided to a member personally, via their electorate office staff, by email, fax or express mail, except that in the case of mail, the draft report is not considered provided, until the time mail would expect to be delivered in the normal course of business.

As members on both sides of this House know, the committee system is one of the most important institutions of this parliament. It is fundamentally a system of review, enhancing the ability of this parliament and its members to hold the government of the day to account and to provide vital input on bills and legislation before it. I have served on a number of committees since being elected to represent Mudgeeraba, and in fact I was part of the parliamentary team which visited New Zealand in the 53rd Parliament when we were considering adopting the new committee processes.

Throughout my time in the parliament, I have been grateful to have been ably assisted by a number of committee secretariats who did provide essential administrative and research assistance and assisted the committees in their day-to-day operations. Unfortunately, there have been many instances where the ability of committee members to assess and provide recommendations on legislation has been hindered by unrealistic deadlines and time frames and disorganisation—including draft committee transcripts which had not been approved for publication but were suddenly found to be on the committee website for public consumption, without giving us the benefit of seeing our own words. That is not good enough. We have also had instances of draft reports, dozens of pages long, being distributed the day of the meeting at which they are to be adopted, and there has been a lack of communication from members of past secretariats. These are undeniably instances where administrative blunders have hindered our capacity to perform our committee work.

Circumventing or truncating the committee process does not provide for effective or efficient analysis of committee reports and in fact puts at risk an essential institution of our democracy. I place on record my thanks to the recently appointed secretariat of the Health and Ambulance Services Committee for their hard work and for doing their best to wade their way through what was left to them by a former dysfunctional secretariat.

As a result of past administrative disorganisation, I am moving this motion today to define specific organisational requirements for committees to ensure that we as members of this place can effectively do our jobs in reviewing legislation, consulting widely and providing recommendations in a timely manner to the House for consideration. Specifically, this motion seeks to ensure that committee members are given at least two days to consider a draft report to ensure that any recommendations or

amendments can be adequately prepared, consulted on and considered. Importantly, it allows for draft reports to be distributed to members in a variety of ways, including through a member's electorate office staff, taking into account that members may not always be instantly contactable due to competing electorate and parliamentary commitments.

As a draft report which is posted can take a number of days to arrive, particularly in regional areas, this motion takes into consideration the number of days it can reasonably be considered to take for a draft report to reach a member by post. In the past, as I have mentioned, it has not been uncommon for committee members to receive reports within hours of a meeting where it is scheduled to be discussed. I will provide just one example for the benefit of the House. The Health and Ambulance Services Committee recently considered a bill and was due to provide a report to the House. Less than 24 hours was provided to consider the draft report. This report was 180 pages long and the time allocated to adopt what was a draft report was a one-hour teleconference. In turn, committee members were provided with 10 seconds per page to read, consider and formulate a series of informed opinions on what was a lengthy committee report on a very significant bill.

The practice of sending draft reports to be adopted cart blanche with no scrutiny and no time to change recommendations is beginning to become a joke. Quite rightly, I and my colleagues on this side of the House could not in good conscience pass a report to be tabled in the House with no scrutiny. With time frames like this, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the committee to consider reports, and as a result it may be that no committee report will be passed for particular bills if this remains common practice.

I have moved this motion after consulting widely with my fellow members about how the committee system can be improved and how we can end ongoing frustration in the way the processes are handled. Queenslanders deserve a parliament which operates efficiently, with legislation reviewed appropriately and mechanisms designed to increase scrutiny and transparency operating as intended. It is for these reasons that I move this motion tonight and I urge my fellow members on both sides of the House to provide their support for the benefit of this place and our democratic institutions. It is not good enough to get a draft report 24 hours before it is supposed to be tabled and expect members of the committee from both sides of the House to sign off on it. It is just not on.