




Speech By
Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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MOTION

Liberal National Party, Political Donations

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (8.46 pm): I rise to oppose the motion moved by the Deputy Premier. The political reality of the situation in the parliament tonight is that the government is a minority government and that neither the government nor the opposition have the numbers to defeat or pass the motion without the support of the crossbench. Therefore, my contribution to the debate will be directed to the members of the crossbench, who will have to make up their minds about the merits of the motion. In addressing the merits of the motion, I will go from a couple of different angles. First of all, I am going to talk about the substance of the motion. Notwithstanding what the Attorney-General just said in terms of characterising the way that the member for Mansfield made his contribution to the debate earlier today, the LNP is not selectively deciding which laws apply to the LNP and when. The matter that is before the court at the moment is testing the law. It is testing the law after a situation where the LNP actually told this parliament, through the committee process and through the debate on that legislation, that in our opinion and in the opinion of others the law is unclear. The government was given notice about our concerns in that regard.

For the Attorney-General to raise that as an issue is very interesting, because I am aware of only one other person in this country who has actively said, 'We are going to decide when and where we adhere to the laws of the land' and that was the national secretary of the ACTU. She said that members of that union and other union members across the state can pick and choose when they adhere to industrial laws of this country. She said that publicly and notoriously earlier this year. The attorney's own people, her own tribe, have said very clearly that the union movement will decide when they comply with the law of the land. After giving notice of our position, the LNP is testing the legislation. We are having the legislation tested in that regard.

The substance of the motion was dealt with effectively by the member for Mansfield earlier in the debate. He very clearly articulated the reasons why the substance of the motion moved by the Deputy Premier is flawed.

The second point that I want to deal with this evening is how the debate has been framed by the mover of the motion, the Deputy Premier, and not the Premier. The Premier eventually had to be shamed into making a contribution to the debate, only after the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education had made their contributions. The Premier had to be shamed into making a contribution.

The Deputy Premier, after framing this whole argument as a matter of leadership—as the Attorney-General did in her contribution—was, in my opinion, very effectively rebutted by the Leader of the Opposition who related to the parliament the litany of failures that has characterised this government over the last 2½ years. In terms of the framing of the argument tonight, the government tried to flee the field in terms of scrutiny and allow this debate to be fully ventilated.

That takes me to the third element of what we are talking about tonight. How is this motion being dealt with as a matter of procedure? Is this a well-planned, reflective motion that has been moved by the Deputy Premier earlier today? We can see a lot of thought went into it. We can see that it has been carefully crafted. We can see with all the little bits of scribble and rubbing out that the Deputy Premier spent a long time reflecting on the substance of the motion and how she was going to put this argument. The fact of the matter is that they needed a distraction for some reason today and it popped into the Deputy Premier's mind that this would be a good way of trying to distract the parliament and the public from the real issues that needed to be addressed earlier today in parliament. That did not go very well.

The Leader of the Opposition touched on this matter earlier today. He said it was a very interesting moment for the government to move this motion. The Premier said in her contribution to this debate that they have been warning people since this debate in 2014. This parliament has been meeting for 2½ years and the government has never taken the trouble to move this particular motion to address the substance of the issue the motion addresses, but they have today. What a shocking indictment on the Premier's argument in relation to that particular issue that they have had the opportunity to do it for 2½ years and yet they have left it until today.

Labor's own members had to jump up and down for an opportunity to contribute to this debate. What we saw, in an extraordinary example of hypocrisy, was the Leader of the House move a closure motion against a resolution that the government had moved itself. That has to be one of the few instances in the history of this parliament when a government has moved a closure motion against a matter which they instigated debate on. The circumstances in which they did that are quite extraordinary.

After they lost the vote on the closure motion, the gag motion, and the parliament repudiated them the Leader of the House came in before the six o'clock debate and moved another motion saying, 'Let's hit the mercy button. Let's only debate it for one more hour. Let our embarrassment only continue for another hour tonight. The mercy button was agreed to by the crossbench.'

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! I realise this is a very heated debate, but we still need to hear what the member for Hinchinbrook is saying.

Mr CRIPPS: The Leader of the House came in here and pleaded to the parliament to put in place a safety net, a mercy button, so the Labor Party could hit the mercy button and only have one hour of debate and the continued embarrassment would be over.

In terms of the merits of this motion, the substance is not there, the Deputy Premier has failed to frame the argument with any coherence whatsoever and the procedure has been all over the shop like a dog's breakfast. It will be very interesting to see if the crossbench reward this litany of failure and throw out this motion moved by the Deputy Premier or treat it with the disdain that it deserves.