




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR HILL

Record of Proceedings, 15 February 2018

MOTION

Sessional Orders

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (5.53 pm): The KAP oppose the motion to amend sessional orders introduced by the government. We say that in part there is merit in the opposition's amendment to the motion and, likewise, the government's amendment to the sessional orders. The aim of this government motion is to bring about a family friendly parliament. When it comes to parliamentary debate I really believe deep down that if there was a motion to bring on an adjournment at 7 pm or 7.30 pm it is something we would relish. It gives us an opportunity to catch up on electorate duties and other parliamentary duties while we are in Brisbane.

There are important issues related to sitting long hours into the night and debating legislation until two or three o'clock in the morning. I spoke to Terry Mackenroth the other night and he said it was very common for them to sit til two or three in the morning under the Bjelke-Petersen government, the Goss government and, likewise, the Beattie government. Those long sitting hours would also force the staff to continue working. There is also the workplace health and safety aspect for staff who travel home and are required to be here til early in the morning. There is also the cost factor, the pressure on MPs and the pressure on staff.

I support the notion—and I believe it has merit—to finish up early, but there is also a trade-off, which is MPs being required to attend committee hearings on a Monday. I believe that this will have an impact on those rural and regional Queensland electorates. I know the member for Gregory would like to be at the Jericho campdraft on the Sunday and the member for Mount Isa would like to be at the Georgetown rodeo on the Sunday. However, for them to travel to an airport they would be looking at a minimum of nine hours travel time. In relation to these MPs—and I have an electorate of 270,000 square kilometres—it is the case that they would really want to get home after that campdraft, spend some time with the family and then travel to the airport the next morning so they can fly to Brisbane for parliament. The amendment to the sessional orders is going to take away that option.

Other factors to consider include the removal of the private members' statements, particularly when the House is fully assembled. The members of this parliament are elected to conduct robust debate. That debate is an opportunity for them to speak in the House when it is fully assembled and in front of the media. It is an opportunity for the opposition to raise their issues in front of the media. The whole design of this parliament is not only to hold the parliament to account but, importantly, to hold the government to account. I feel these changes are going to remove the opportunity for the opposition to participate in that robust debate.

The government does have a lot of legislation to get through the House. There are also going to be private members' bills from the opposition, Independents and crossbenchers. There is going to be a lot of legislation. Even if we make these changes, we know we will not always see a 7.30 pm finish because government can suspend standing orders in order to rush through legislation. That will see us

going past the proposed finishing time to get important legislation through. We see this all the time. As a result of this issue we do have concerns regarding the opportunity and the amount of time that opposition members and crossbenchers will be able to speak if these changes are brought in. For all these reasons we cannot support the government's motion.