




Speech By
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MOTION

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (4.51 pm): I rise to address the time limits that are being offered for the debate about our sessional orders. It is very important that we have an understanding that the honourable member for Cooper spoke for two minutes about why we should truncate the debate. That is three times longer than is being offered to the members to actually have the debate. She spoke for three times longer explaining why we should have a one-hour debate. She spoke for 120 seconds and there are 38 seconds being offered to each member to speak on this debate. I wonder why on earth we would have a situation where the opposite side would only like each member to have 38 seconds to discuss the sessional orders.

I am more than happy to come back to the sessional orders in that debate, but the job of this chamber is to hold the executive to account. All I have heard so far is the executive not wanting to be held to account by giving the members of this House the opportunity to speak on having themselves gagged by the executive. That is a very dangerous situation for our democracy here in Queensland. If the executive can gag the parliament so that they have one-third less time to talk about why they should not be gagged than the member for Cooper spent explaining why she should be gagged, it just makes a lunacy of the whole issue. The member for Cooper knows that she spoke three times longer than the members of this House are being offered the opportunity to speak in the substantive debate.

It is incredibly important for me that the members of this House have the opportunity to hold the executive to account. If they cannot hold the executive to account we will end up with a situation where an arrogant, lazy government will make this parliament jump through hoops. Giving someone 38 seconds to speak against why they should not be gagged sounds like a gag in the first place. We have a double gag going on. One has to ask why on earth would those opposite be working so hard to silence this chamber. If we are going to silence this chamber surely we can save the taxpayer a lot of money and all go home and move to a dictatorship, which we know the executive would like to have.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr WATTS: Why don't those opposite move a motion to dissolve the House, get rid of it all and appoint a dictator. The government wants a dictatorship. It is gagging this chamber from being able to express its will and hold it to account. It is using the weapon of the standing orders and restricting the time members can speak by gagging this motion to stop us from being able to explain why we need more time.

This chamber deserves to have time to discuss the standing orders. The standing orders are the rule book that governs this parliament. If that rule book is going to be torn up and the members of this chamber unable to hold the government to account then I cannot look my electors in the face and say that I can do the job they elected me to do. They elected me to make sure that the government of Queensland does a job on their behalf. I do not understand why a government that proudly announces how well it did at the election would be afraid of having the members of this House hold it to account.

There can only be a couple of reasons. They are either very arrogant, very incompetent or possibly both. What concerns me the most is if you have an arrogant, incompetent government that is truncating debate in this chamber, what kind of service are we delivering for the people of Queensland. I am concerned for my constituents in Toowoomba North that I will be unable to do the job that they have elected me to do, which is to make sure that this chamber serves the people of Queensland well and truly.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members. It is getting a bit heated. Member for Cooper, be very careful.

Mr WATTS: In summing up, the only possible reason I can see for wanting to tear up the standing orders is to silence criticism of the government. The only reason for trying to stop us even debating the standing orders is because the government members are terribly afraid that the people of Queensland will realise they are both incompetent and arrogant.