



Speech By  
**Trevor Watts**


**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 May 2018

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (COUNCILLOR COMPLAINTS) AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL  
(IMPLEMENTING STAGE 1 OF BELCARRA) AND OTHER LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT BILL**

**Allocation of Time Limit Order**

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (12.04 pm): We are talking about the management of the House, and there is a simple way to manage the business of the House. We have a committee structure. The committee structure is bipartisan. It was put together so we could avoid lengthy and unnecessary debate in this chamber. I put it to the House that if the bill was drafted correctly in the first place, it could go through the committee process. That would then cause a lot less debate when it comes to the chamber because we would have heard the points. The points would have been made, evidence would have been heard and there would have been public consultation with the communities we are all elected to represent. That is the point of the committee structure.

The committee structure can then make recommendations, and then it is up to the House to debate those recommendations and decide whether it will accept the voice of that committee and its recommendations. That would truncate the debate. What does not truncate the debate is bringing in legislation that does not at its core have a centre of bipartisanship, although sometimes they do but there are simple little things missing. My constituents want their voices heard. If they cannot be heard through the committee process because the legislation was poorly drafted and late amendments come in and then are put before the House with no discussion and no consultation, that causes lengthy debate. First and foremost, I would say that the committee structure is the place where a lot of this debate could be avoided.

The second point is that we need to agree on the things we can agree on, so we should bring bills to this place that we know are going to serve the whole of Queensland well. When people bring bills into this place containing things that are wholly unacceptable to large parts of our community, we will—as 93 representative members—be forced to stand up and represent those communities who have not been listened to in the drafting of the bill. Whether it be the bill before the House and the undue influence of other segments of the community or whether it be about people's property rights to deal with vegetation management, if that has not been dealt with through the committee system and if the bill itself does not have enough bipartisan support, then there will be a vigorous debate. It is not for this chamber to truncate that debate. It is not for this chamber to have people gagged and silenced so that they cannot have their voices heard.

We live in a democracy. This House represents that democracy. It is very important that everyone from the community of Queensland has the ability to be heard in this place when it directly affects their lives. Whether it is their property rights or whether it is their ability to hear a voice at an election because somebody has a big bank balance and somebody has a small one, these issues fundamentally affect our democracy and its function, and to truncate that debate would be completely disingenuous to our

community. There can be nothing of a higher order to our community than to have our democracy and people's property rights protected by the rule of law in this place. To have a dictatorship that says how this House will vote by the end of the week is complete and utter anathema to our democracy. Our democracy deserves better than to be told how the duly elected members of our representative democracy will vote at the end of the week.

I put it to the House that we would not be in this situation if we had legislation that was far more bipartisan; if we had a better consultation process; and if we in fact used the committee process as it was originally designed. The government is desperately trying to manage the business of this House to guillotine debate, to deny voices and to change the course of our democracy. How long we can speak for, who can be paid, how it can happen—this is not representative government. It is not a representative democracy. It is arrogant; it is a union dictatorship. I put it to this House that we should be able to stay here and debate the fundamental cornerstones of our democracy.