




Speech By
Trevor Watts

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2018

REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; BETTING TAX BILL

Allocation of Time Limit Order

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (9.57 pm): There are a couple of points I want to make. First of all, we can talk about the logjam and we can talk about managing the House, but there is a mechanism that was looked into and introduced in a bipartisan way—that is, the committee system. The committee system was specifically introduced so that on legislation we could seek out and discover from witnesses what would be good ideas and different ideas. Then they could be talked about and voted on, and hopefully some agreement could be reached.

If you approach every piece of legislation as your God-given right to ram it through this place, then every member who opposes that legislation has a right, having been elected by the people of Queensland, to stand and speak their opposition and articulate their reasons for that opposition. They have been voted in to represent the people of their electorate. They can do that through the committee system. They can do that through private meetings. They can do that through negotiation. For them to simply to come in here and say, 'No. Thou shalt do as I tell you or I will guillotine the debate,' that is not democracy. That is not managing the business of the House. In fact, that is leaning heavily towards a dictatorship where there is a suppression of any dissent.

Government members interjected.

Mr WATTS: I hear the squealing from the other side. The simple fact is that being in government in this state means that you have a majority of members of this House and you have the ability to come into this House and introduce legislation for members to debate. It does not mean that you have the right to come into this House and force your will on every single one of the 93 members of this House. To suggest otherwise is completely incorrect.

I take the minister's point that the House needs to be managed, but in most parliaments in the Westminster system there is a fair amount of negotiation and there is a reasonable amount of compromise. When that happens, there is better legislation because it is more representative of the people's will in Queensland if everybody who represents the people of Queensland has an opportunity to have an input.

There are a couple of points. First of all, if we keep having motions put without notice, it will be very difficult for me to write my speech of opposition and request that it be incorporated. The first thing would be for the government to stop moving motions without notice. If the government gave some notice, we might not all need to stand up. We might be able to write our thoughts and have them incorporated for consideration.

Mr Bleijie: You could just email them to mangocube.

Mr WATTS: We could email them to mangocube. I am sure he is reading those carefully. I do not want to get taken off track because there are some on that side who think this is a joke. They think this building should just issue a rubber stamp to the members who sit on this side and then anything that is

raised should be rubberstamped. We have a committee process and we have a parliamentary floor, and everybody in here has the same right to speak up for their electorate and speak about the desires of their electorate as seen by that individual member. To take that right away is a very dangerous thing. It is very dangerous for democracy here in Queensland. I would say a couple of things. First of all—

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr WATTS: Sorry?

Ms Trad: Democracy according to you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Deputy Premier, your interjections are not being taken.

Mr Bailey: He's tongue-tied.

Mr WATTS: My tongue is certainly not tied. The member who is sitting opposite who is suggesting that my tongue might be tied might pay more attention to the roads and the second range crossing and delivering it on time—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Toowoomba North, if you are not going to speak to the motion, I will ask you to resume your seat. I ask you to speak to the motion, please.

Mr WATTS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I was taking his interjection and replying to it. My point is that, if the committee structure was such that there was time and opportunity for members to have a debate and a discussion so that various views could be put and evidence could be tested and recorded and that an outcome could be negotiated which everybody in this House could live with, I think a lot fewer members would need to stand up and speak in here. When the government try to ram things through and do not listen to members who represent their electorates across Queensland, we will have a situation where members want to get to their feet and express their position. That is the problem with a motion without notice. It takes away the ability for members to be able to express the position of their electorate.

I am one of those members who as yet has not made my speech on the address-in-reply. I have spoken on the first budget but I have not made my speech on the address-in-reply. It is not necessarily a document that everybody is rushing to read, and I accept that, but it is very important for the process of this House to have members record the important things in their electorates. I would like to record some of them before people in my electorate pass away, because they have cast their vote but they will not necessarily live forever. Hopefully, there will be an opportunity to make that address-in-reply speech at some point.

I urge the Leader of the House to instruct the committee chairs to be more welcoming of discussion and ideas from other members of this House—be they from the crossbench, their own backbench or the opposition. If they do that, we may find that a lot fewer members in this House will have the desire to get up and speak and represent their electorate. If members opposite want to try to run a dictatorship with a thin veneer of a parliament underneath and try to quash debate, then we will have no choice but to use the mechanisms that are in front of us. Those mechanisms are to rise and oppose a motion that is put without notice that outlines a guillotine to quash the debate and reduce opportunities for members to represent their electorates.

If there was a little bit of discussion, a little bit of negotiation and a little bit of bipartisanship across legislation, we might get a lot more done. Other than that, we will just have to accept that not everybody who lives in Brisbane will get to go home and have dinner with their families. I have accepted that I cannot go home and have dinner with my family when I come down to this place. I am more than happy to stay and get some work done whilst I am here. If the business cannot be managed within the hours using the mechanisms such as the committees and the discussion in this House, then of course the hours will have to be extended and the guillotine will be—

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Under standing order 236(2), the member is clearly using tedious repetition. He is repeating his arguments over and over. He is not adding anything new to the points he has already made now on multiple occasions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Toowoomba North, you have the call.

Mr WATTS: I was actually trying to wrap it up, but it is so difficult because there are so many opportunities with the member opposite to extend the conversation about an inappropriate process in this House. Whether it is guillotining debate, whether it is moving motions without notice or—

Mr BAILEY: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Once again, under standing order 236(2), the member is repeating himself over and over and over again. I seek a ruling about whether the member is in conformity with standing orders. I believe he is not.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: At this stage, I will allow the member for Toowoomba North to continue and there will be no point of order. However, member for Toowoomba North, I will counsel you to make sure you are speaking to the motion and there is not tedious repetition.

Mr WATTS: Hard as it is to believe, I am actually trying to sit down. I just want to make one last point. There are many processes of this House. One of those is the ministerial handbook. The member opposite, who has now repeated his point of order twice and is somewhat repetitious and somewhat tedious, needs to read and follow that ministerial handbook.

The processes of this House will lead to good outcomes for the people of Queensland. They will lead to good legislation and good government. An opposition that will hold a government to account is a worthy thing. A government that will negotiate and represent all the people of Queensland is a worthy thing. Anybody who thinks they have a God-given right to come in here and ram their agenda down the throats of all the people of Queensland needs to take a long, hard look in the mirror, because that was not what the founding fathers of this parliament had in mind when this parliament was set up and the first debates were held here 150 years ago. I will now sit down with some time on the clock, just for the benefit of the minister opposite who in fact cannot manage his portfolio.