




Speech By
Jarrold Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Record of Proceedings, 18 March 2020

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (10.23 pm): We oppose the motion. As I said in earlier debates, it is extraordinary that, the government having just passed a motion that gives the government the power to ask the Speaker to not have parliament sit, we are now having this special adjournment whereby we are coming back in two weeks. But, as I said to members earlier, we are not. If the health officer today—and we can base it on what the government is saying is the latest health advice—is saying that it is too risky for members of parliament to be here on Thursday, and then all the health advice says the coronavirus is going to get worse before it gets better, I do not suspect we will be here in two weeks time as the Leader of the House said. This is a rouse to make it look like they are coming back in a couple of weeks. They realise that the sessional orders they have just changed give them extraordinary power, and now we are debating whether we are coming back. We should be coming back tomorrow. We are here. Do you know why we should be coming back tomorrow?

Mr Minnikin: It is our job!

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Chatsworth. It is our job. We should be here tomorrow. More importantly, the youth justice bill is before the House. Minister Farmer has said that urgent amendments must be made to that act. We could do it tomorrow. If we do not adjourn the House now we could be here tomorrow. We could debate the youth justice bill to get those important provisions through to try and save property and get people's livelihoods back on track, particularly in North Queensland and even in Brisbane now with the northside gangs that are roaming around. Minister Farmer herself said this week that her laws are not working and she is going to amend them. We do not have to wait until 31 March: we can come tomorrow. I know that the member for Cairns is very interested in youth justice reform because I read an article where he said, 'I am going to the Attorney-General and I am going to demand changes.' When he said it in the paper he forgot that he was talking about the wrong minister, because the minister responsible for youth justice is Minister Farmer. We should be here tomorrow. Minister Farmer should be here tomorrow making changes to what she said is not working.

As I said earlier—and for those members who were not in the House, or for the members in the House who were not listening—I suspect that the next time we will be in the House is after the election, and I hope we are sitting on that side of the House. The way this government is going I suspect that might be the case, because if we do not have parliament to raise these issues—which we will not—then we will make sure the Queensland community is still informed about what this government is doing. What this government is doing is adjourning the House now to a few weeks time, yet we were meant to sit tomorrow. Not only should we debate the Youth Justice Act but what about the electoral reform bill?

Mr Krause interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Scenic Rim, you can leave the chamber under standing order 253A. You were under a warning. I have given you plenty of opportunities to remain silent. I apologise for the interruption, member for Kawana.

Whereupon the honourable member for Scenic Rim withdrew from the chamber at 10.27 pm.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker; I will sort him out later. As I was saying, there are provisions in the electoral reform bill that start before parliament is now due to come back. We should be debating that tomorrow. What will then happen is that when parliament eventually does come back they are going to have to make those provisions retrospective. As we have seen in the last five years, the government has a habit of making retrospective reforms to the Electoral Act.

The Attorney-General and Leader of the House, who is moving this motion, has provisions in that bill that are due to start before the next election in October, including spending caps. Attorney-General, are the spending caps going to be in place? Because if they are, then I see the member for Mansfield—I was just thinking of our fabulous candidate with whom I was in Mansfield the other day, Janet Wishart. She is a fantastic candidate. The member for Mansfield was nodding her head yes, the spending caps will be in place. Have I missed a sitting where we passed those laws? As far as I know, the law is not in place. I suspect the member for Mansfield would know that if she spent less time whingeing about our great candidate, Janet Wishart, wearing a badge on school grounds and making a complaint about her.

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. The Manager of Opposition Business might have just predicted and pre-empted that.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, I ask you to come back to the motion before the House.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for your guidance, Mr Speaker. As I anticipated, that was the case; I thought it would have happened earlier. We should be sitting tomorrow. We have important bills. There are the reforms to youth justice. There is the disability permit parking legislation which was on the agenda and which could have started. We could be debating that tomorrow. We could have debated it today; in fact, we could have finished it today but the vision-impaired people of Queensland now have to wait. Although the government thinks that we just oppose these measures for the sake of opposing, no, we are not. Disability parking is important. For the visually-impaired in Queensland, it is important. We started the debate yesterday and now we are not finishing it but adjourning to 31 March. As I said, I doubt we will be back.

Mr Minnikin: It's cruel.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is cruel, I take the interjection from the member for Chatsworth. The electoral reform legislation will be in place before the next sitting as will the spending caps. The government will need retrospectively to amend that down the track. The disability parking legislation, which is important to Queenslanders, now will not be passed. I was really looking forward to the debate on the youth justice amendments in terms of all the opposing views in the Labor government. We look forward to whether we will have that debate, but I can guarantee one thing: if what I said occurs and we are not back until after the election, I can guarantee and assure the Labor party that youth justice amendments will be one of the first priorities of a Deb Frecklington government. There is plenty of action ready to go on that.

The fact is we should not be adjourning now. We are here tomorrow, but we should be in the House. There is no guidance from the government in terms of whether any committees are meeting. We have no information with respect to that. It saddens me that the government now is using the coverage of the coronavirus to cover up so much in the state. We can understand why: it wants to escape scrutiny of these matters and the youth justice amendments. Not only is there an electoral bill that we should debate tomorrow; there are also the ministerial accountability provisions in that bill which are very important to the people of Queensland. We just are delaying all these important decisions that should be made by this House. As I said, the wheels of government do move and there are ministers sitting opposite who have no ministerial responsibility for the COVID-19 response. That could—

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection based on the performance of the last few years that some of the ministers have really not done anything in their portfolios. There is plenty of time for some of those ministers. Look at them across the chamber now.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, I ask you to come back to the motion.

Mr BLEIJIE: The important aspect is that the House has important matters before it. As we said, yes, the COVID-19 response is important; the economic response will be even more important. I was told earlier by a business that it will off-load hundreds of people tomorrow. This is sad. What is sadder is that the elected representatives of these people will not have a voice in this parliament until God knows when.