




Speech By
Jarrold Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Record of Proceedings, 3 December 2020

MOTION

Amendment to Standing Orders

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (12.36 pm): This motion is with respect to the entities to which direct questioning of chief executives at the estimates is to apply, and I thank the Leader of the House for circulating this motion before she moved it. I have just spoken to the Leader of the House. With 2020 being the way it has been with the global pandemic, I would like the committee to have the opportunity to directly question the Queensland Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young. Standing order 181(c), which the motion refers to, states—

... a Chief Executive Officer, (as set out in Schedule 7) is to be present at all times for the entity for which the Chief Executive Officer, is responsible is under consideration ...

Looking at standing order 181(a) to 181(g), technically the Chief Health Officer would not naturally fall into any of the categories—that is, she is not the ‘responsible minister’, the ‘director-general’ or ‘a chief executive officer (as set out in Schedule 7)’. Standing order 181(d) states—

... a committee member may ask the Minister, Director-General or Chief Executive Officer questions ...

Standing order 181 states—

- (f) advisers may answer questions referred to them by the Minister, Director-General or Chief Executive Officer; and
- (g) a member may ask any question which is relevant to the examination of the Appropriation being considered.

We have concerns that the Chief Health Officer is not on the list, which would ordinarily allow the committee to ask her direct questions, but, as per our conversation, the health minister is able to ask the Chief Health Officer to answer particular questions. I am still concerned that the questioning to the Chief Health Officer is not able to be direct questioning by a committee member. Those questions have to go through the minister, and the minister in any of these committees can say no. That is concerning.

I hope the health minister would not do that, and she has indicated to me that she will make the Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, available for the entirety of the health committee. I would prefer to see the Chief Health Officer on this list. There are a plethora of groups and organisations on the list, including all the budgetary ones as well as the Queensland Art Gallery, the Audit Office, the Building and Construction Commission, the Competition Authority and the Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

With the way that 2020 has unfolded, I suspect members will have lots of questions not only to the minister but also to the Chief Health Officer because she is best placed to answer those questions. I do take the conversation that the Leader of the House and I have just had—in that she will make the Chief Health Officer available all day, albeit not through schedule 7 and not being able to be directly asked the questions.

With the estimates process we have and due to the seriousness of the issues of 2020 and the global pandemic that the ministers continually reminded us about today, I hope in good faith that the Chief Health Officer will be able to freely answer questions. I would like the minister to consider—

because this is in her power—that on the day of the estimates hearing she allows direct questioning from members of the committee, be it government members, crossbench members, visiting members or opposition members. They should be given the opportunity to ask questions direct to the Chief Health Officer, who I think in the circumstances is best placed to answer them.

On the condition that the minister has assured me that she will make the Chief Health Officer available, I am not going to oppose the motion relating to schedule 7. As I said at the outset, I would like to see the Chief Health Officer on the list, being able to be asked direct questions. I do hope the minister allows the Chief Health Officer to be asked questions directly because the minister can in fact do that on the day during her estimates process.