



Speech By  
**Robbie Katter**


**MEMBER FOR TRAEGER**

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Record of Proceedings, 26 November 2020

**MOTION**

**Sessional Orders**

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (6.15 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate of the amendments proposed by the member for Maiwar and the original motion. To add some value, I heavily endorse a lot of what the member for Maiwar said. In response to the questions from the government, it would seem on the surface that we should give that right to government backbenchers, but in the nine years I have been here I do not think I have ever seen a government backbencher—LNP or Labor—directly challenge their ministers. I would have thought that once in those nine years someone would ask—

**Mr Hinchliffe** interjected.

**Mr KATTER:** No, that is true. That would be true 90 per cent of the time, but you would expect that once in those nine years one person would ask a challenging question of a minister, but they have not. I suggest that is pretty strong evidence.

**Mr Hinchliffe:** It is their choice.

**Mr KATTER:** I take that interjection. It is their choice, but you are still ignoring the evidence.

**Mr Hinchliffe** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The member for Sandgate will put his comments through the chair.

**Mr KATTER:** Let the public make their own judgement on that evidence. We do not need to argue it.

To add some value from the perspective of a regional or rural MP—these are just facts; I am not trying to make an emotional plea—I have a much bigger electorate. There are other members who represent big electorates. That means we spend more time in a plane or a car than other MPs in smaller electorates. That means we have less time to see the incoming legislation, less time to do media, phone calls—everything. Then when we get to the other end we have condensed our day and have a lot less time to respond. I and the other crossbenchers come to parliament with no resources available to us and we are supposed to get across what is coming in here. If I have done that during my compressed time back in the electorate, when I get here on a Monday I am at a distinct disadvantage in terms of thinking about what I want to say on bills.

I do not want to put my name down to speak on everything—I want to be fair and reasonable with everyone else; I think it would be unreasonable for me to start putting my name on every speaking list—but I can say that I am not getting the speaking spots I used to get and nor is Shane Knuth. I am not getting the opportunities. It used to drive me nuts hearing repetitive speeches—I agree with the member on that point—but there is a cost to this that must be acknowledged in this debate.

I could come into the chamber, track the debate and say, 'I didn't realise this came in. I wasn't following this.' I did not have staff to tell me anything. I did not have a large number of colleagues to tell me, 'The debate is moving this way. They have introduced this bill,' so I would know I needed to go and

speak on the bill as it was really important for my electorate. I would race down, and it did not matter what side of the House the speaker was from. They would say, 'We can probably fit you in.' Everyone was pretty gracious, would fit you in at the end of the speaking list and I got a spot. That does not happen now. That is a fact. Most of the time we are responding to the whips by saying, 'I'm not sure what this is about. Let me find out. I think I want to speak on that.' We end up down the list, debate is truncated and we miss out. There is a direct prejudice against particularly rural MPs.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr KATTER:** Spend a week with us and you can experience it for yourself.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Put your comments through the chair, member.

**Mr KATTER:** I am sorry, Mr Speaker. Governments should not be scared of interrogation; they should welcome it. We need more time to debate bills, discuss issues and provide some variety. We have inherited this bulky two-party system. We say that we add some variety to that and play an important role in this parliament, but our opportunity to do that is being drastically diminished. That is a real problem. The government of the day can do whatever it wants in this place, but there is a cost to what this government is doing. That is why we will always vote against these sessional orders. Our opportunities have been diminished, as have the voices of remote areas and regional communities.

I will finish on family-friendly hours. Let me state the obvious: it is not family friendly if you live outside the greater Brisbane area. I used to come down on the Monday and now I come down on the Sunday. That is a fact. Again, the government has the right to amend that, but there is a cost. I would prefer to sit until 2 am or 3 am. As much as I hated it, I would much prefer that than be away from my home for another day.