




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Operation of Parliament

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (2.46 pm): It was to be a great honour again to deliver the end-of-year valedictory speech on behalf of the crossbench; however, even though this is the last sitting of the 56th Parliament it is not to be. Instead, I have been advised that it will be delivered after the election, in the first sitting of the 57th Parliament. This is very strange given that elections can bring many changes, and potentially those who have been here all year and part of that ‘wrap’ may not be here come November.

This is another flaw in our sessional and standing orders—rules, regulations and policies that need to be revisited as part of modernising an aged system that no longer serves well this chamber or the communities we represent. There are many examples we all must work on to see a more efficient, fair and collaborative parliament. The adversarial nature of endeavours between the two sides of the House leads to many hours spent in a contest of wills versus the concise debate of bills. The inability of the Business Committee, with representatives from both sides, to extend sitting hours as needed to accommodate extensive agendas or even utilise lunch breaks leaves many scratching their heads.

Even though I have been mostly supportive of the business program motion to get through as many bills as possible by allocating time for debate, I query why standing orders are not amended to ensure all members have opportunities to speak. This is not difficult. As one wise person once said to me, ‘If you can’t get your main point across in three minutes you’re missing the point.’ For those in parties, members can always donate their three minutes to others, giving plenty of flexibility where needed. I have spoken before of bills and amendments introduced the night before, leaving little time to thoroughly investigate them, and a committee system that would be better served by following the models of other jurisdictions with a chair that is independent or from the opposition as part of holding the government to account.

We must do whatever it takes to create a space where the framework we operate within gives flexibility to work whatever hours are required to reduce wasted time and that an increasing number of independent entities be utilised to ensure parliament operates more in line with Queenslanders’ expectations. We need an environment that is appropriate to ensure effective decision-making and not constricted through outdated modes and restrictions.

Out of every challenge we are confronted with, there is an opportunity for refinement and betterment. COVID-19 has been a mirror. It has reflected our shortfalls as well as our enormous strengths. Importantly, it has highlighted what is relevant and what we need to concentrate on. Queenslanders seek the simplicity of getting straight answers to questions and having systems that ensure we can deliver, yet the most basic of requests are often caught in the machine of government and it takes years instead of months to get a resolution for a constituent or our community.

This is not the fault of anyone. It is the very system itself and a reactive culture that has developed over many decades. How often do we hear to our suggestions all the reasons why we can't versus how we can? We shelved that 'can't' culture during the COVID emergency and now we must leave it on that shelf where it was put. We do not have the luxury, as we did pre COVID, to work through endless reviews, take years to develop strategies and then wrangle for funding. We must get on with it now.

There are no guarantees that any one of us will be here after the October election. To each and every one of you, I send you the very best for your campaigns and teams, electorate staff and families. Please join me in rejecting the poor behaviours, the election tokenisms that are being touted across our communities and the ugliness that is already pervading across social media and headlines. Please show respect to our communities by not engaging in the dangling of carrots and disingenuous promises that Queenslanders are so weary of. Put your best foot forward with dignity and passion. May we all have the honour again of standing here after 31 October in this chamber of the people's house—united in our efforts to resolve issues confronting our communities across the state and build that future sought by the people we represent. Blessings to you all, and thank you.