




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Record of Proceedings, 1 December 2021

MOTION

Dissent from Speaker's Ruling

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (6.28 pm): I rise this evening to oppose this motion of dissent moved by the Greens political party member for South Brisbane. In doing so, Mr Speaker, I support your ruling. At the outset I associate myself with the remarks of the Leader of the House. Motions of dissent and rulings of the Speaker in this Legislative Assembly, as the Leader of the House has quite properly indicated, are a very rare and exceptional event, and they should be only moved on the most rare and exceptional of occasions. This is not that motion and this is not that time. I do share the concerns of the Leader of the House that political motives will activate these sorts of motions in the future. That would be a grave threat to the conventions and the practice of this House and should in no way be tolerated.

Mr Speaker, in opposing this motion I take account of your extensive reasons which make the position very clear, particularly with respect to the financial initiative of the executive, something can I say that the Speaker of this parliament is very familiar with. In our system the revenue-raising capacity of government is authorised by parliament on application of the executive. This convention is well accepted, it is well established and it has been well established for centuries. It is reflected in our Constitution.

I note with interest the legal opinions relied upon by the Greens political party. I think respectfully the opinions of these individuals do not refute your rulings, Mr Speaker, which reflect amongst other things Erskine May and the *House of Representatives Practice*. Mr Wilson and Professor Carney are correct to observe that there is no obstacle arising from the Constitution to the assembly dealing with taxation and revenue, but the Constitution is not the only relevant matter here. The standing orders, the conventions, the custom and practice of the parliament must also be weighed, as you have done, Mr Speaker. Professor Orr is correct to observe that the financial initiative of the executive is a convention. Like any convention, it can be overridden by statute. However, the relevant convention in this case has not been overridden by statute. The financial initiative of the executive still stands in respect of revenue measures. In my view, it should not be overridden.

Mr Speaker, as your ruling makes clear, our system is constitutional government and our conventions are important and they are there for a reason. Unlike the Greens political party, the Australian Labor Party has a leader, we have a Premier and we form a government. The Premier and the government retain the confidence of this House and the Premier retains the financial initiative of the executive. It is not for individual MPs or minor parties to try to restructure the revenue arrangements of the executive. That is a matter for democratically elected governments that continue to retain the confidence of the Legislative Assembly. The Greens political party get their opportunity at the ballot box and on the floor of the House, but they do not get to dismiss important and well-established constitutional conventions and parliamentary conventions on a whim for political purposes.

The cornerstone of our state's democracy is representative parliamentary government. Importantly, as your ruling makes clear, Mr Speaker, parliamentary government does not mean government by the parliament. This is not a decision about the merits of the proposal by the Greens political party; this is about the higher principle—the Greens often lecture others about principles—and that principle is that money bills originate from the executive. People can debate the rights and wrongs of the specific convention, where it comes from, its history and why, but it is the convention and it forms a core component of our system of parliamentary representative democracy.

In my view, the convention reflects an imperative of good government. That imperative is as relevant today as it was 500 years ago. That imperative reflects the point that the legislature should not obstruct or impede the financial continuity of the government so long as the government retains the confidence and support of the legislature.

If the Legislative Assembly wishes to remove the government, it should do so by expressing no confidence. The legislature should not tolerate political stunts that wilfully obstruct the financial arrangements of the government. If we open the door to that kind of interference that the Greens political party are suggesting, then we open the door to 1975—1975 when the Australian Senate wilfully, deliberately and shamefully interfered with parliamentary conventions and constitutional conventions that obstructed the supply of the Whitlam Labor government, one of our nation's most progressive federal governments. No matter how they seek to cloak it or how they seek to hide it, that is exactly what the Greens political party seeks to do. Their motion, if it were successful, would unleash the same reactionary forces that abused parliamentary process to traduce constitutional and parliamentary convention to bring down one of our nation's greatest progressive governments, a progressive Australian Labor Party government.

Reactionaries always use false constructs to harm progressive governments. We saw it in 1975 from the Liberal and National Parties and we saw it again in 2009 when, again, it was the Australian Senate which voted down the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. All members should support your ruling, Mr Speaker, and resist this reactionary alternative.

The Greens political party are not in government, they have never been in government and they never will be.

Mr BERKMAN: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Again, the Treasurer's comments bear no relevance whatsoever to the motion that we are debating at present and I would seek your ruling on that point.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask you to resume your seat, member. I have been listening very carefully to the contribution by the Treasurer and it is clear that he has, by and large, spoken about nothing but parliamentary convention and a range of things related to standing orders. It is in order and I will ask the Treasurer to continue.

Mr DICK: In conclusion I say this. The Greens political party are not in government, they have never been in government and they never will be in government. That is because they will always be a party of protest and never a party of government. They have nothing to administer except their electorate offices. They should stick to their core business and focus on what they are good at, which is carping and criticising. All I say is I support your ruling, Mr Speaker, and I oppose this dissent motion.