




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

Record of Proceedings, 24 February 2021

MOTION

Estimates Process, Referral to Committee of the Legislative Assembly

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (5.37 pm): I am pleased to rise to oppose the motion by the member for Maroochydore. It is quite galling and embarrassing that the opposition would move a motion like this, because from my experience of the estimates process it is those opposite who do not take the estimates process seriously, who ask irrelevant questions and who perpetuate silly stunts. That is hardly best practice.

At the outset I wish to thank the ministers, their staff and the many public servants across all departments who worked so diligently and professionally on the estimates process. I know the hours and weeks that go into the preparation of the responses to questions on notice by those who attend and respond to questions at the estimates hearings. It is an important process and one that we on this side of the House take very seriously.

Other members have already highlighted the absolute hypocrisy of those opposite in pursuing this motion. The Newman government changed the estimates committee hearing times so that all seven committees sat at the same time and only over two days, making it impossible for opposition members to attend and scrutinise ministers. The member for Clayfield, thinking to himself, said, 'Yup, them's were the days!'

We were the ones who restored the estimates committee schedule to one committee per day spread over two sitting weeks—two sitting weeks, not two days. We know one of the absolute mistruths that the opposition peddled last year was about the state budget. They told Queenslanders that the government was deliberately not delivering a budget. 'Where's the budget?' we heard them say. What they were not telling Queenslanders was that there was a national agreement that states would deliver their budgets after the federal government delivered theirs, which of course had been delayed as a result of COVID-19. That was a deliberate mistruth and it was so disappointing to not respect the agreement of the national cabinet.

This motion seeks to increase the time available for questioning. And, yes, member for Coomera, I have also had a look at the 2020 program, and the Premier of Queensland did spend more than three hours answering questions, the Treasurer did spend more than four hours being questioned and the Deputy Premier did spend more than three hours answering questions. Honestly, if you could not get answers after that time, what is wrong with you? That was not including the breaks; that was straight questioning.

The Palaszczuk government believes in our democratic processes. Most of those opposite would remember that before the election the Treasurer handed down the *COVID-19 Fiscal and economic review* which outlined the government's economic position at the time. As part of this, there was also a public hearing held on Friday, 11 September where the Premier and the Queensland Treasurer

appeared before the Economics and Governance Committee to respond to questions. This is just another example of how our government is ready to answer the questions Queenslanders have about their government and their budget.

What I would say to the opposition is that I do not think extra time is the problem. What takes up time, member for Maroochydore, is when a member throws a terrible tantrum, screeches—which is the only way to describe it, because I swear my dog heard it in Springfield—then is thrown out for poor behaviour and does an amateur drama teacher stomp out of the chamber. It was not only embarrassing but it was highly disrespectful of the many people who, as I said earlier, had worked to prepare and be prepared for the estimates.

I do want to say something about preparation. I had the opportunity to be part of the estimates process in 2018 and 2019 as part of the Innovation, Tourism Development and Environment Committee. One of the things that I enjoyed greatly was observing what the member for Burleigh understood as preparing for estimates. Members, this is what it looked like: one, member for Burleigh gets out of bed; two, member for Burleigh cranks up the computer; three, member for Burleigh goes to Google and types something indescribable; and, four, member for Burleigh smiles widely and thinks 'Gotcha.' In 2018, the member turned up to estimates with his gotcha question, and this is how it went. Honestly, this was the question. He asked—

I wonder if you have done a Google search of 'department of innovation Queensland' lately? I did that this morning. I seek leave to table the results of that search.

Based on his Google search, the member stated that the department's website had not been updated since 2015. Shock, horror! What became self-evident two minutes later when every one of the members actually pulled up the website on their phones was that the member for Burleigh was actually looking at the wrong page. We probably wasted about 10 minutes on that question—

Mr HART: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is misleading the House and I will be writing to the Speaker about it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): There is a process for dealing with that, member for Burleigh. It is not a point of order.

Mrs MULLEN: It was a gotcha question that got no-one, except the member for Burleigh. When those opposite talk about reforming the estimates process, perhaps they need to look more closely at their own behaviour and their own preparation—but then it would seem that self-reflection is a little lost on the LNP.