



Speech By  
**Christopher Whiting**


**MEMBER FOR BANCROFT**

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Record of Proceedings, 24 February 2021

**MOTION**

**Estimates Process, Referral to Committee of the Legislative Assembly**

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (5.16 pm): I rise to oppose this motion and this is why. The opposition's use of estimates shows they are spectacularly ill-equipped to pose as the champions of transparency and efficiency. Firstly, let us look at the quality of their questions and their general approach. On the quality of their questions, I note that they had 18 months or so to prepare. In my committee they had nearly five hours of questions compared to three hours of government questions, and guess what? They were still hopeless.

Members heard the Treasurer say it: if you want better answers ask better questions. The epitome of hopelessness was a question from the member for Warrego. She asked why the local government department used the example of a councillor with a dog having a conflict of interest if they are voting on a dog park. She said it was in the departmental training manual. It quickly emerged that the department had on their website an example of a councillor being able to vote on a dog park if they had a dog. It is an example of an interest held in common. She got it completely wrong.

What they did was peddle half-digested bits of information and try to package them up as probing questions. I will not apologise for trying to bring their questions into line with the standing orders. What thanks did I get for trying to help them out? None.

In terms of their general approach, they view estimates as a chance to launch political gotcha attempts. They have no real interest in the actual scrutiny of expenditure. They are prepared to throw everything at six-year-old emails and disrupt the proceedings of the committee just to make a political point.

The LNP want this to be a process of scrutiny but scrutiny works both ways. Political observers scrutinising the general approach of the opposition during estimates have found it very, very mediocre. Let us look at what they propose. They want to inquire into the transparency, efficiency and efficacy of our committee estimates process. I am going to be Nostradamus here. The answer is that any system is only as good as the quality of the opposition: if the opposition give bad inputs, they get bad outputs. It does not matter what system we use because it would be wasted in the hands of the LNP. They want to see how we benchmark against other parliaments. I would love to see how the performance of this opposition benchmarks against other oppositions.

In talking about the quality of questions, the member for Nanango asked a question about potential job losses in manufacturing. When the member was asked to show her source, she referred the committee to a *Courier-Mail* opinion piece by economist Gene Tunney. If you want better information, go to government sources.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order, members!

**Mr WHITING:** They just do not like taking my advice, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am going to make it easy for the opposition. I will give them some preliminary findings of any an imaginary inquiry into the estimates process—that is, any system of scrutiny is wasted in the hands of an inept opposition and, when it comes to any complaints about answers, the quality of answers directly reflects the quality of the questions asked. I oppose this motion because I think it is a waste of our time and it is rubbish.