




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

Record of Proceedings, 24 February 2021

MOTION

Estimates Process, Referral to Committee of the Legislative Assembly

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (5.21 pm): I rise to support the motion. Firstly, it is my view that the government earn the right to be the government and manipulate the process, as far as the process allows, to suit themselves, as other governments of both persuasions have done before. That does not mean that the government is free from scrutiny. The government should still be the subject of the greatest of scrutiny. If it strives to be a good government, it should welcome scrutiny to the highest level. I think anyone who knows their job and knows their portfolio should welcome questioning as it gives them an opportunity to answer.

As a member of a minor party and a member of the crossbench, in the context of this budget, we had a week I think it was. I went home from parliament. I was buried in a sea of issues across a vast electorate. In the meantime I raced back to Brisbane to compile some questions. Then I get to estimates and hear answers that are akin to ministerial statements again—statements that I have heard before. There was a definite strategy of interjection this year. I was definitely pulled up more than I have been in other years. That surprised me. That was a reality. The main issue was preamble. I mentioned this the other day in another speaking spot.

With the preamble, without diluting the message of the question, I am trying to give the minister some context to give a reasonable answer. I would have thought they would appreciate me giving them some context so they understand what I am asking. I can ask a 'gotcha' question and try to catch the minister out, if they like. I am trying to make this process meaningful so they can give an answer. I might not like the answer but I think it is an important part of the process. I kept getting pulled up on the preamble. There was a strategy evident to me—perhaps it did not start at this estimates—to lengthen answers and reduce the time for questions. That does diminish the process. They can hide it or they might not see it as a problem, but it does diminish the process. If they are striving to be a good government, they must welcome that sort of scrutiny and rigour. When it comes to avoiding scrutiny, well I wonder why they would. They should invite scrutiny.

Estimates is a part of parliament that observers really enjoy because it is about getting to the crunch, airing opposing views, having time to apply rigour and having the DGs there to answer questions. I really look forward to that process now. There are times when I run out of questions, but most of the time I find that I am fighting to ask them. Other members come in and ask questions. In my case, it is a five-hour trip just to get here and spend the day here. It is an impost. To have that process diminished in any way to just hear more ministerial statements does not do anyone any good.

Trying to improve that process by having some independence in the chair I think would work wonders in this place. Any good government should not be scared of that. They should welcome that scrutiny and welcome that rigour. I love having a debate and having to defend myself on points that I want to put forward in the parliament, because it gives me an opportunity to explain where I am coming

from. They should love it too. That is why we are here in parliament. That is what people want to hear. They do not want to hear repetition of government policy or positions. They want to hear opposing sides clash and to hear outcomes. That is the essence of why we are here. That process is being diminished.

The process could do with an overhaul. It could be improved. I think there is a linear trajectory. As a participant, one becomes more and more disengaged because there is less opportunity. This is a good opportunity to refresh and to reset the clock. We need to have a process that people deserve. There is a lot of disillusionment about politics and government out there at the moment. I can assure members of that. Estimates is a time when people get their value out of politicians. The government should not diminish that, but they are diminishing it if they keep manipulating the process as they do now. On that basis, we will be supporting the motion.