




Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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COMMITTEES

Estimates Hearings

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (6.35 pm): I rise to speak to the motion. I note that the LNP opposition will be opposing this motion. I start with the comments made by the Leader of the House that we should take some comfort from the fact that the same process is being applied this year that was applied last year. We all know how the estimates process went last year. Do not just take our word for it: many external commentators reflected on the appalling behaviour of committee chairs in particular by protecting ministers from being asked meaningful questions and ministers in particular filibustering, obfuscating, not answering questions. It was a debacle. Therefore, we do take very cold comfort in the fact that what we are being presented with tonight is exactly the same as last year.

We heard the Leader of the House talk about some statistics—for example, that 60 per cent of the time was spent by members of the opposition or crossbench asking questions. Actually, 60 per cent of the time was spent by members of the opposition and crossbench asking questions but also by ministers answering questions. Many of those answers were unnecessarily wrong, they did not even answer the question and further questioning was often not allowed because that also included the protection rackets being run by the various committee chairs. If we looked at the number of questions, the amount of time those questions were asked and how many of those were answered, I suspect you would find that it was far less than the 60 per cent of the time the Leader of the House mentioned.

Ms Bates: Frivolous points of order.

Mr POWELL: There were frivolous points of order taken by committee chairs—I take that interjection by the member for Mudgeeraba—from the Labor members of the committees. They have literally become an absolute and utter farce, so let's drill down a little bit more into what we are being presented with. For example, let's look at the first day of sittings with the Premier and Minister for the Olympics. This is the first officer of this state. This is the person elected to run the state of Queensland. How many minutes, how many hours, are we going to have to question the Premier? We have a total of three hours and 15 minutes to question the Premier of this state not only about the broader operations of the state but particularly about the Olympics. Even if we take the 60 per cent proposed by the Leader of the House, that equates to less than an hour and 45 minutes of opposition and crossbench questioning of the Premier of the state of Queensland. That is simply appalling.

Let's move to the Treasurer, the individual actually responsible for the overall budget. How long will we have to question the Treasurer? All up there are three hours and 45 minutes. Again, if we use 50 or 60 per cent of the time, that is less than two hours of questioning by opposition and crossbench members of the Treasurer, the individual responsible for handing down the budget.

Mrs Gerber: They don't like scrutiny though.

Mr POWELL: I take that interjection from the member for Currumbin. It is clear that the Palaszczuk Labor government do not like scrutiny. For the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister Assisting the Premier on

Olympics Infrastructure, there are three hours and 15 minutes. The three most senior ministers of the Palaszczuk Labor government will have a total of just over 10 hours of questioning, of which the opposition and crossbench will be lucky to get 50 to 60 per cent. That is less than six hours to question the three most senior ministers of the Palaszczuk Labor government.

If we look at the issues that are confronting Queenslanders at the moment, we have in particular the health crisis. The health minister and member for Redcliffe has actually duded herself a bit because she has four hours, which is longer than the Premier, longer than the Treasurer and longer than the Deputy Premier but still not anywhere long enough for members of the opposition and the crossbench to ask meaningful questions about the health budget—a health budget that they themselves again say is a record health budget. Mind you, every year is a record health budget. That is four hours, which is at best two hours or two hours and 15 minutes of questioning from the opposition of the health minister around the health crisis. Then if we look at one of the larger infrastructure portfolios, there is a total of three hours and 45 minutes worth of questioning of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. That is something like two hours for the opposition and crossbench.

The government clearly do not like any form of scrutiny. There is no way humanly possible for the opposition and crossbench to be able to ask all of the questions we want to ask about the budget in those kinds of time frames—let alone if we see a repeat of the protection rackets that were run by the various committee chairs last year. External commentators noted that, and they have said how much of a sham this estimates process has become. Therefore, we in the opposition cannot and will not support this motion. There is much more I could say, but I know that other members on our side want to have a chop at this. We again have a guillotined debate on this motion. These kinds of things need to be debated in full, but because we only have half an hour I will leave my contribution there. It is not good enough and the LNP will not support this motion.