




Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Record of Proceedings, 18 August 2022

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Integrity

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (2.49 pm): I rise to address yet more examples of the Palaszczuk Labor government's increasing efforts to avoid scrutiny and accountability. In March the Speaker gave significant advice regarding questions on notice. He stated—

... as long as the question accords with the standing orders and is genuinely seeking to elicit information which should be available to the minister, I will rule that the minister should answer the question in a relevant and genuine manner.

The Speaker went on—

Responses must pertain to the question asked. If not, they are irrelevant and the question will be considered unanswered. Answers which contain gratuitous political statements that are not relevant to the question asked will be ruled out of order.

...

If the data is available it should generally be provided.

I thank the Speaker for his considered oversight of the matter.

Sadly, it appears that the government has no intention of adhering to the Speaker's rulings. For starters, the government is missing deadlines. Responses are not being received by their due date. A Parliamentary Library brief shows that in 2020, 20 of the 1,067 questions or 1.9 per cent were provided after the due date; in 2021, it was 46 of the 1,698 questions or 2.7 per cent; and in 2022 to date, it is already 43 of the 774 questions or 5.6 per cent. That suggests one of three things: (1) deliberate delay; (2) sloppy, lazy internal controls; or (3) increased quality assurance by the Speaker of the content, with answers being sent back. Whichever it is, any one or all of those explanations reflect a tired third-term government that increasingly is determining that they are above proper parliamentary scrutiny.

I will give one example. Question on notice No. 688 was asked by the Leader of the Opposition of the health minister on 23 June. The answer had a due date of 25 July. We are still waiting for a response a month later. Even with increased quality assurance efforts by the Speaker, responses still do not meet community examinations. I can give plenty of examples. One is that in 2016 and 2017, when the opposition asked questions of the then health minister, the member for Woodridge, regarding adverse clinical incidents they were answered. In 2022, we are being told that answering them would be unreasonable. What has changed other than the attitude of the government?

Finally, whilst avoiding commenting on the contents of the motions, I want to speak of the Palaszczuk Labor government increasingly using the committee system as their own personal political play thing. There is an agreed process that involves the Committee of the Legislative Assembly and discussing committee referrals. Many of the more recent references have not been to the CLA, have not been shared with the opposition and crossbenchers, and are not even circulated when moved.

I understand that the government of the day has an ability to propose committee investigations, but in lieu of an upper house we regularly refer to a robust committee system that involves consultation on what committees consider. They should not become a vehicle for the Labor government's retribution or base political pointscoring. Each of those examples further demonstrates the arrogance of this visionless third-term Palaszczuk government.