




Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Record of Proceedings, 12 September 2023

MOTION

Business Program

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (11.19 am): After what we saw in parliament during the last sitting week, it will probably come as no surprise to the Leader of the House and the government that the opposition will be opposing this business motion. Despite the words that the Leader of the House shared around amendments, no longer will the opposition take the business motion at face value. Let me remind people that in the last sitting we had a 47-page bill around child sexual offenders that would have had the support of the opposition and, I suspect, the crossbenchers. At the last minute it was amended with 58 pages worth of amendments. None of them were relevant to the bill itself and some of them were incredibly significant. We were left with less than half an hour to debate those amendments. On that basis we will not support this business motion and we will not support future business motions because, despite the words on this page, we cannot trust the government.

We heard the Premier go on about previous governments and their track records. The Premier promised to be different, but we have seen the Premier come in here and make significant changes to a piece of legislation with less than 48 hours notice. There was no committee consideration and no ability to debate those amendments in consideration in detail. I speak on behalf of not only the opposition but the crossbench as well, who expressed significant frustration that sizable changes to a number of pieces of legislation were all moved en bloc at the end of proceedings at the last sitting. It is no wonder the opposition had no choice but to vote against the third reading even though we voted for the second reading of the bill. That is not how this place should operate. It was trashing parliamentary democracy, and the Leader of the House and the government know it.

I suspect that, despite what seems to be a fairly innocuous business program for this week where we will be debating the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Surgeons) Amendment Bill, the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Water Legislation Amendment Bill, there will be amendments. We heard the Leader of the House say they have already been tabled and they have already forewarned the House what they are, but we still have not seen them. We do not know the significance of them. Never again will we take those opposite at face value and vote for the business motion.

As members of parliament we need to debate legislation as we see necessary. Members of parliament need to represent their communities, their electorates, as they see fit. Their contributions and the number of contributions should not be capped or guillotined and should not have time constraints put on them. They should not have to justify to their whips or the government whips why they should have an opportunity to speak. They are elected to come into this chamber to speak and they should be able to do so. That goes for amendments as well. Whilst there will be very short consideration in detail opportunities this week, some of these amendments may need to be unpacked further. Some of them may have come from committee reports—that is what the committee process is there for—but some have not been to committees. That was the problem with what occurred during the last sitting, when 58 pages of amendments were rammed through this House with 48 hours notice.

We cannot continue to operate in this manner. We have told the government over and over again that we do not support the way they are managing the business of this House. If they have an agenda they need to get through, it is their responsibility to make sure we sit the appropriate length of time to consider those pieces of legislation. We have put on the table that we are more than happy to sit late each night. That is what we are elected to do. We have mentioned before that the so-called family friendly hours are not very friendly for those of us who come from regional Queensland, and I say that for those of us who just come from the Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba or the Gold Coast. We are not getting home to our families regardless of whether we rise at 7.30 or 10.30, so let's sit later. Let's allow our members the opportunity to speak not only on bills but also amendments. Let's do away with these business motions altogether and let's go back to the way parliament used to operate when I was first elected in 2009. Let's have robust debate; let's not be afraid of that. Let's ensure the people of Queensland have their voices heard through their elected representatives. We will not be supporting this motion.