




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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COMMITTEES ESTIMATE HEARINGS

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (10.52 am): I too rise to contribute to the debate on the motion concerning estimates. It was fascinating to hear the Leader of the House's contribution about some of the shadow minister and some of the questions they ask. The ex-minister for health, the current Attorney-General, had the hide to actually—

Mrs D'ATH: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I ask that the member use proper titles.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The Attorney-General of Queensland?

Mrs D'ATH: Yes, you know what.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Ex-health minister?

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Order, members! I will seek some advice.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nanango, order! Member, I remind you to use correct titles in the House.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I just heard the interjection from the Leader of the House who said that they do not call me something. You call me lots of things, Attorney-General.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, direct your comments through the chair.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The minister, the Attorney-General, calls me lots of things.

Mr Mander: The Attorney-General of Queensland.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The Attorney-General of Queensland—

Mr Mander interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Everton, order!

Ms Grace interjected.

Mrs D'Ath interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members for McConnel and Redcliffe, order!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: What do we see with the timings? This is one of the most important issues. We know that there have been so many crises facing Queensland. We have seen the reshuffle. We know that estimates gives shadow ministers and committee members the opportunity to ask the ministers questions. There is the housing crisis, the health crisis and the crime crisis, but another crisis that is not given enough attention in my opinion and in the opposition's opinion—and it was acknowledged by the Premier when she sacked the former child safety minister and put in a new minister—is the child safety crisis that is occurring in this great state of ours. It is afforded 37 minutes—

Ms Camm interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will take that interjection from the shadow child safety minister—37½ minutes is allocated to child safety in this state. We know that the former child safety minister was unable to answer questions. Now we have a new minister who took—what?—10 seconds to answer a question this morning and did not actually answer the question. That is why we need openness, accountability and transparency—not these little bits of time. The chairs of the committees run a protection racket—we all know that. The ministers are not over their briefs. They cannot answer the questions. They sit there reading through dixer. Why not just ask minister questions? It is ludicrous. It is like, 'Please read out a ministerial statement, sir, like in *Yes Minister*.'

We need an estimates process where the questions are allowed to flow. We have government members who cannot ask their own questions. They have the minister's questions in front of them and they read them. Some ministers who wish to avoid scrutiny speak slowly to use up the time for government questions. The opposition and crossbenchers get the same amount of time—it has to be equal—but if government backbenchers actually scrutinised their own budget instead of just listening to the answers to dixer questions that get put by the ministers, we would have some natural flow in the estimates process.

This is a huge budget and we need adequate time to examine it. That takes me to some of the other issues. We know that we have a crime crisis. How the police minister avoided the reshuffle is a topic of conversation with every police officer that I speak to. They say, 'How did he avoid the reshuffle? The health minister was sacked. The housing minister was sacked. Who else?' The child safety minister was sacked. All of these ministers were shuffled around. The police minister will only be afforded an hour and a half of scrutiny. No wonder—the police minister has overseen a reduction in police officers—

Mr Healy interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Cairns, order!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: This is the police minister who has overseen a reduction of 72 police since the election. No wonder the minister does not want any scrutiny.

An honourable member interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will take the interjection. He is saying, 'Oh, it's not right.' Well, tell that to the police officers sitting in a car without a person beside them because it is approved to have a police officer—

Mrs D'ATH: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. This is not estimates; this is a debate about the motion and times allotted for estimates. The member should be brought back to the motion.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will get some advice. There is no point of order.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your protection. It is that protection that the government seem to think they deserve from the chairs of the committees during the estimates process, but they do not afford the opposition members and the crossbench members the same type of free-flowing estimates process. The chairs of several committees are talked up by the ministers saying, 'We cannot answer the questions. We don't know how to answer the questions, so can you run interference?' Every time a shadow minister or a member of a committee actually asks a decent question, they take a point of order and wind the clock down because we know that the chairs are protecting the ministers who are completely incapable of doing their job. We know that because the ministers cannot even look up from their prewritten notes during the estimates process.

I put to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there are probably only two ministers who can look up from their notes in acknowledgement and run a different line if the question is a bit tough. Then we have the chairs who sit there running a protection racket, protecting the ministers to make sure they do not get into trouble with their answers because it is not written down in front of them. I heard the Attorney-General, the former health minister, talk about questioning the public servants. I put to the Leader of the House the reason that the public servants are on the list—and this is the Attorney-General's own motion—is so we can ask questions of those public servants. The reason we do that—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you going to table that?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is the motion. I am happy to table it but it is the motion. It has already been moved. The reason we have to do that is that quite often—and, again, I say there are probably only two ministers who know how to answer the questions—we need to go to the people who are sitting behind the ministers to get the answers because we know that the ministers are not on top of their briefs. We have to do that to get the truth. We have to find out the reasons behind—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time for debate has now expired.