




Speech By
Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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**COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY: REPORT, MOTION TO TAKE
NOTE**

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (3.20 pm): We have just heard hubris and smugness in the government interjections from across the chamber and I think that really sums up what has gone wrong with the estimates process. Government chairs see their ticket to promotion in protecting government ministers who cannot do their job. They run down the clock. We have seen situations where government chairs will rephrase a question by saying, 'Oh, I think you mean'. In fact, that has happened with the member for Logan who has run down the clock in a ridiculous way. Labor backbenchers are not pulled up by the committee chairs for moving points of order that are out of order and, because time is so short, opposition and non-government members have no chance to dissent against a ruling. You would have to go off line, do it within the committee structure and take time away from the estimates hearing. It has really become a joke. I think that the smugness and the arrogance of the interjections from Labor members, in fact, sums up the—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excuse me, member. Members, I ask you all to check your microphones.

Ms SIMPSON: The smugness of government members' interjections reveals just the tip of the iceberg because throughout the estimates process we see them behaving in this way as if it is a game. I would like to name and shame a few others who are primary culprits, but it would take too much time at this point. It is disappointing because I do believe that the estimates process and the committee structure in general started out with the best of intentions and with bipartisan support from across the parliament. What has happened in recent years is an abuse of the process. It is a protection racket and it is just not good enough. That is why I support the points raised by the Leader of the Opposition when calling for reform in the estimates process.

However, I would go further in regard to the committees and matters that are dealt with in secret and not released in full to the parliament. Those things are happening over and over again. Labor dominated committees hide minutes and procedures with the intention of keeping things secret. Committees should be doing the opposite. There should be a default situation where they release information. They have used the committees as a way to beat up issues behind the shed, as it were. It is not done in public and it is not done with full scrutiny. It should be. That has to finish.

I want to talk about the provisions that the Leader of the Opposition has outlined. We believe that more time should be given to allow for adequate questioning on expenditure. The structure of the estimates process has evolved with tight time frames, but that is not the way that it was initially set up. The process has become constrained and does not allow for continual questioning to follow through on issues. We see quite bizarre structures of government in terms of ministerial responsibilities across portfolios. There need to be clearer lines of accountability in view of the time of estimates hearings.

We support having a Speaker or Deputy Speaker having the ability to take over in regard to consistency of ruling. When Labor members think that this is how they are going to get themselves promoted to the cabinet—and good luck, because apparently the Premier does not want you—they take obstructive behaviour that is more about grandstanding than allowing the process to flow in a way that a good chair or deputy chair would enable.

The reaction from government members throughout this debate highlights why the estimates process is as broken as it is. They are so arrogant that they think they can get away with anything. I have seen some government backbenchers try to have questions ruled out of order even though I do not think they have ever picked up a standing orders book, but it is all about running down the clock. That is not in the interests of integrity and transparency. We need the system reformed. We need respect for the system rather than the game playing and arrogance that we are seeing from members opposite.