




Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Record of Proceedings, 13 February 2024

MOTION

Amendments to Sessional Orders

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (4.12 pm): It will come as no surprise that the opposition will be opposing these changes to the sessional orders for the 57th Parliament. In so doing, let me refute a couple of the points made by the Leader of the House. He used the term ‘discussion’ to describe what occurs at the Business Committee. There is no discussion. The members of the opposition and the crossbench who are at that Business Committee meeting are told what is going to be occurring. As for the preparedness of any of the non-government members, if that is a reflection on the fact that we refused to hand over the exact number of opposition members who want to speak on each bill, I reserve the right to continue that practice.

I informed the Leader of the House that just about every single member of the opposition—and the member for Noosa did likewise in terms of the crossbench—wanted to speak on the integrity bill. There was no opportunity—zero opportunity—for any compromise in terms of time allocation. Indeed, when the suggestion was made that the members of the opposition shorten their speaking list on the summary offences bill and the transport bill, we asked the Leader of the House whether, if we were to do that, the government members would filibuster and fill the remaining time, and there was no answer. So please do not try to paint what occurred last night as some form of discussion or that in some way the non-government members turned up unprepared.

I also turn to the point made about the newly allocated time slot for the crossbench motion each week. I welcome that. I think the crossbench should have an opportunity, and indeed they have. This is where the Leader of the House has demonstrated his unpreparedness. He is not aware that, on the basis of proportional representation of non-government members, members of the crossbench are already allocated motions, questions without notice, speeches, private members’ statements and adjournment speeches. Every single one of them is carefully worked out by the whip and done in negotiation with members of the crossbench. To suggest that up until this sudden change to the sessional orders the Manager of Opposition Business, the whips or indeed the LNP were not providing proportional representation to the crossbench is farcical. It is absolutely and utterly farcical.

I do note that committee reports will be moving to Wednesday. I also note the words of the Leader of the House that there is fresh committee membership. If the Leader of the House is referring to the members for Miller and Sandgate, they are hardly fresh. If that constitutes fresh faces in terms of the committee membership, then I am sorry: Queenslanders have been sold a pup once again.

Let me come to the most controversial aspect of this motion—and we spoke about it this morning when it was alluded to by the Leader of the House—that in effect the government is gagging the gag. The business program is a gag on all members of this House. It restricts who can speak and for how long on each piece of legislation. It is not only the members of the opposition who are gagged but also members of the government. I know that they shared this with the previous leader of the House and I do not doubt they are sharing it with the current Leader of the House: they are missing out on opportunities to represent their communities as well.

We had a gag in operation under the Palaszczuk Labor government and now under the Miles Labor government. However, the Miles Labor government is going one step further. We are not even going to be able to debate the elements of the gag. That 20-minute debate at the end of question time on a Tuesday is now going to be cast aside and the motion is going to be put and a decision made immediately. That is, as I have said, a gagging of the gag. They have sunk to a new low.

The people of Queensland know that the government are not listening. Now they are ensuring that they do not have an opportunity to listen to the people of Queensland's representatives. The people of Queensland's representatives sit in this chamber. We are elected to have input on every aspect put to this parliament and now we are being told we cannot. They might think they have a decisive agenda. What it shows is that they are going to ram through whatever is in their political interests to try to save their political livelihoods. They do not have any interest whatsoever in the people of Queensland. They have given up listening to the people of Queensland, and that is evident in what is being moved here this afternoon. It is a shame.

Members of the government have talked about the fact that this is in operation in other jurisdictions. As far as I am concerned, it is one step too far for any jurisdiction that they would stifle debate on the very thing that is stifling debate; they are gagging the gag. We in the opposition cannot and will not support this aspect of it.

In conclusion, I want to reflect on the words of the Leader of the House that he is giving back time to the members for debate. We are getting 15 minutes back, but we are losing 30 minutes each week because of the crossbench motion. If they want to give back time to members of this House for debate, take up the LNP's proposal, which is to sit later every single night. A simple hour each night would give us three extra hours of debate, and that would largely mean that this debate, the business program motion, becomes unnecessary because there is extra time for everyone to debate. In fact, we could sit an extra two hours. We could go back to having a dinner break. I am sure the Clerk would appreciate the extra business that would come through the dining room if we were to have a dinner break and then sit for two or three hours afterwards.

The government uses the phrase that it is 'family friendly' for us to pull up stumps at 7.30 pm. I again reflect on the fact that there is barely anyone on this side of the House who is getting home to see their family. It is not friendly for those of us here who do not live within the Brisbane City Council surrounds, so let us sit. Let us throw away this sessional order change that the Leader of the House has proposed. Let us vote it down and come back with another one that truly gives members of this House the opportunity to have their say on the legislation that matters to the people of Queensland—legislation that will fix the housing crisis, that will fix the health crisis, that will fix the youth crime crisis, that will fix the cost-of-living crisis. For all of those reasons—and I have just shot down every single one of the arguments the Leader of the House made on this matter—I implore members on both sides of the chamber to vote against this motion.