




Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2024

COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (2.06 pm): As a member of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly, I too rise to speak to the *Report on the 2023 budget estimates process*. It is a little-known fact that the CLA has a responsibility to monitor and review the business of the Legislative Assembly with the aim of the effective and efficient discharge of business and to monitor and review the operations of committees. Each year we produce this highly informative—to use the words of the member for Capalaba—report that basically is a compilation of tables and graphs that include things such as the length of the estimates hearings, the length of government questioning, the length of non-government questioning, the total number of government and non-government questions and to whom those questions were directed. If you want to, you can compare the figures all the way back to 2013. I was told when I studied statistics at university that you can basically get them to say whatever you want.

Mr Tantari: You're pretty good at that.

Mr POWELL: Labor are very good at that. I was also told that statistics can tell one story. They can tell you a quantitative story but they cannot tell you a qualitative story. This report in no way describes what happened throughout each of the estimates committee hearings. Anyone who looks at this report might think, 'Wow, the non-government members and the crossbench got a great allocation of time.' What is not in the report is the protection racket that occurred by just about each and every one of the Labor committee chairs.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): The member for Logan will cease his interjections.

Mr POWELL: A lot of the time that is supposedly allocated to non-government members was actually taken up with arguments between the Labor committee chair and a member of the crossbench or the opposition who asked the question on the validity of the question and whether it was in order or whether it could be ruled out of order. This report does not talk about the number of questions that were ruled out of order.

It certainly does not address the quality of the answers from ministers or departmental officials if they were lucky enough to get a question put to them without too much fuss or interference from the Labor members of the committees. It is well and good for members like the member for Capalaba—I suspect the member for Logan is going to say something very similar—to stand up and say, 'Gee, what a great estimates process. It's working brilliantly. Non-government members are getting a fantastic proportion of time.' I can tell honourable members that that is not how each of those estimates hearings was reported in the media at the time or more broadly in the community because everyone saw them for what they were: a protection racket.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Glass House, I ask you to withdraw that unparliamentary language.

Mr POWELL: I withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: And the instance from before as well.

Mr POWELL: I withdraw that too. There was obfuscation, filibustering and just simply not answering direct questions. The LNP opposition believes that the system is so broken and there is such a politicisation of the chairs of those committees that we have given a commitment: should we be fortunate to be elected in October, it will be the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker who will chair each of those estimates hearings to ensure far greater fairness, far greater application of the standing orders when it comes to questions being put, and far greater accuracy in ensuring that ministers and departmental officials stay relevant to the question put to them so that the people of Queensland can find out the answers they deserve to have.

The whole intent of the estimates process is to conduct a forensic analysis of how the government is spending their taxpayers' dollars. It should be open, transparent and fair to ensure that Queenslanders can find out where their dollars are going and how efficiently and effectively the departments are being operated by the ministers, directors-general and statutory authorities. The LNP has taken a very reasonable policy position to ensure that moving forward we do not get reports that are all just numbers and tables but actually talk to the fact that it is a meaningful exchange of questions and answers through the estimates process for the benefit of every Queenslanders.