




Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 17 April 2024

MOTION

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (6.46 pm): This all started because I asked to speak—and I was hoping to speak this morning—because the situation I was facing as chair had become literally untenable. I have no knowledge of anyone else being asked to speak, but I just wanted to get up and actually advise the House about the progress of the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee, especially given there has been so much media coverage and so much discussion in this chamber, and I think everyone wants to hear something.

As the House knows, the committee has been working towards the completion and tabling of an interim report—an interim report, not a final report—after six months of our inquiry which has incorporated 26 meetings, 13 public hearings, nine public briefings, 220 submissions and site visits. As chair I have endeavoured every step of the way to work patiently, impartially, respectfully and collaboratively with both sides of this chamber to get a balanced, nonpartisan report on the many contentious issues that we have heard about. This has been an incredibly difficult environment, heightened by the media and the politicking with the upcoming election. This has not been easy and has come at great cost.

Prior to commencing the drafting of a report, the committee had workshopped the content on three occasions, from memory. Even though there was consensus within the committee that Queensland's youth justice system is not meeting the community's expectations with regard to community safety and the rehabilitation of children and young people and that earlier intervention is required, members' views on how best to address this have proved polarising. As a consequence of this, I have sought to achieve compromises in an effort to reach a bipartisan agreement, which consistently has been asked for by Queenslanders whether it has been at public hearings or otherwise.

This journey has included three extensions of time granted for members to consider the draft interim report and the issues raised throughout the inquiry by submitters, witnesses, including victims, and members. Since the release of the draft four weeks ago, I have repeatedly asked committee members to articulate in writing what they want to delete, amend or insert into the report, including recommendations, so they can be considered and we can work collaboratively on this.

Where received, they have been incorporated for discussion. However, there have also been broad statements of objection which have been difficult to translate into specific amendments, with requests to the writers to articulate further either ignored or brushed off. In addition, there were statements that a report will not be agreed to unless it includes recommendations that clearly we could not get consensus on.

Despite the workshops, multiple meetings and extensions over a number of weeks to consider and approve the draft interim report, at the adoption meeting yesterday the report failed to achieve a majority under the current rules. This was deeply saddening. Even though significant amendments had been accomplished and the ability was still there to raise any concerns via a statement of dissent or reservation, which is standard.

Of note, I believe that the very vast majority of the 55 recommendations that we got to would have been approved as they had not been raised as requiring amendments or of concern.

That we have not delivered a bipartisan agreement so far, as needed by Queenslanders, has been personally and otherwise deeply disappointing. I will say again how very sad I am. An outcome where there is no report tabled, especially given that we have developed and agreed on many substantive comments and recommendations, is unacceptable. It is for these reasons that I regretfully—and really regretfully—stand here to seek the parliament's support to amend the voting rules agreed by the House on 12 October 2023—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Pause the clock!

Mr de BRENNI: Deputy Speaker—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock! Resume your seat, member. Resume your seat, Leader of the House. I will take some advice.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, you are warned under the standing orders. Members, I was trying to listen carefully to what the member on her feet had to say and the extreme outburst there did not allow me to hear that. I will grant the member a few additional seconds. The time is always at the discretion of the Speaker. I call the member for Noosa and I would like to hear the final part of her contribution in silence.

Ms BOLTON: Literally, I am just asking that we go back to the standard voting rules so that we can take that report back to be able to work again to try to get there because Queenslanders deserve to see that interim report made public. There is absolutely no reason for it not to. So much work—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member. I think you have made your point.