




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 2 April 2025

MOTION

Queensland Redistribution Commission, Appointment

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (5.41 pm): I rise in support of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. This Premier talks about transparency, openness and respect for the Westminster system and then his government proposes to appoint John Sosso to the Queensland Redistribution Commission. The hypocrisy of the Premier had me questioning whether this was a poor attempt at an April fools' joke. The Premier is making decisions that reek of arrogance, hubris and complete disregard for our democracy.

Almost 40 years since the Fitzgerald inquiry, the LNP is back trying to rig elections by moving electoral boundaries that suit them. It goes to show the LNP have not learnt a thing. Mr Sosso is not independent, he is not bipartisan and he is not fit for this position. Mr Sosso certainly has a colourful history; it is very blue and yellow. This appointment is a shameless attempt by the Premier and his deputy to throw our state back to the 1980s, back to the dark days of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen—a time, let's not forget, when Queensland politics and the Public Service was infested with corruption, nepotism and cronyism. It was a time when the old boys' club was running the show. Well, the boys' club is back. The Minister for Education himself even calls it 'da boys' club'.

The people of Queensland should be terrified because this boys' club wants to recreate the halcyon days of the 1980s. It was a time when the government used its unbridled power to redefine electoral boundaries to win elections. Democracy was just a dream in Queensland until the Fitzgerald inquiry, but of course Sir Joh and his boys' club did not want to play along, so what did they do? They sent Mr John Sosso to nobble the Fitzgerald inquiry. He was actually placed there by the Joh Bjelke-Petersen government to run interference with the Fitzgerald inquiry.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Nanango, I have cautioned you many times. You are now warned.

Ms FENTIMAN: You do not have to believe me, member for Nanango. In fact, Fitzgerald himself mentioned Mr Sosso when writing to a parliamentary committee. He said—

When the Inquiry was established in 1987, the National Party Attorney-General was advised and influenced by a small ambitious group of Justice Department bureaucrats. The Attorney-General appointed one, John Sosso, as Secretary to the Inquiry. Sosso didn't last long in that role but returned to the Justice Department which, as the Inquiry's report notes, did little willingly to assist the Inquiry.

As reported in the *Courier-Mail* just today, which I table, Mr Fitzgerald found Mr Sosso was susceptible to influence.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 2 April 2025, titled 'Qld politics: Labor pushes back at John Sosso move to QRC' [296](#).

Let's not forget that John Sosso was a member of the LNP, and the LNP have looked after Mr Sosso just as he has looked after them. I table an article from Terry Sweetman from 2015 which outlines his extensive partisan history working for every conservative government since Joh.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 19 March 2015, titled 'Opinion: Justice director-general John Sosso's dismissal is not without precedent and long, bitter memories' [297](#).

This man actively tried to run interference so that Joh Bjelke-Petersen could continue gerrymandering here in Queensland. Not content with those efforts, he was then deputy director-general in the Borbidge government when they launched the much maligned Connolly-Ryan inquiry which was seen by many as an attempt to completely discredit the Fitzgerald inquiry—

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mrs Gerber interjected.

Ms GRACE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I think you did notice that the Attorney-General interjected and she is on a warning. I think consistency applies.

Mr SPEAKER: You were on a warning, member for Nanango. I am going to have to ask you to leave the chamber for an hour.

Whereupon the honourable member for Nanango withdrew from the chamber at 5.44 pm.

Ms FENTIMAN: I think the member for Currumbin might want to listen to a bit of this history. He was deputy director-general in the Borbidge government when they launched the much maligned Connolly-Ryan inquiry which was seen by many as an attempt to discredit the Fitzgerald inquiry reforms. He was of course the director-general of Justice and Attorney-General in the Newman government when the member for Kawana was the attorney-general. What happened when the member for Kawana was the attorney-general and John Sosso was the director-general? That is right; they appointed Tim Carmody as the chief justice and commenced world war III with the judiciary. This is the history of the individual they want to put on the independent Redistribution Commission.

If John Sosso is appointed to the Queensland Redistribution Commission, will he gerrymander to appease his new boss, his old boss, his good friend and the party that he worked so hard to get into government? Remember, he worked on their incoming government plan. He was helping them before they even were in government. Do we really want to go back to the days when the LNP ran riot, using their positions to silence women, isolate minorities, destroy the environment, disadvantage our First Nations people and line the pockets of their mates? That is where it is headed—back to the 1980s. Any redistribution of seats must be independent and it must be done in a fair and democratic way where Queenslanders have a voice. John Sosso should have absolutely nothing to do with the redistribution. Tony Fitzgerald did not trust him and Queenslanders sure as hell should not either.