

Speech to Parliament 24 March 2015

Honourable Members I am honoured to be elected as the Speaker of this 55th Parliament. I sincerely thank the Premier and Deputy Premier for nominating me and for their kind words.

Fairness, equality and justice for all have been the cornerstone of my life as a police officer, solicitor and politician. And this is reflected in the proposed new Standing Orders which will guide the operation of our Parliament.

There will be greater opportunities for non-government members to present their issues and I thank the Government and the Opposition for working together and finding common ground. I hope this will continue.

With the numbers in the House so close, I anticipate we will see real debate and exchange of ideas leading to the best legislation possible.

While I acknowledge robust debate is part of the normal operation of our parliament, it is my intention to make sure that when motions are moved for debate, there is genuine debate on the substance of the motion and likewise when questions are asked and answers are given, they are relevant.

In the public gallery I am joined by my wife Jenny, my parents and family members. I acknowledge that without the help and support of my wife who is my researcher, campaign manager, wordsmith, and best mate, my political career would not exist.

As I have said before, I owe no favours to vested interests, lobby groups or parties. And, in this context, I acknowledge the significance of my election to this office as only the second Independent Speaker in Queensland's history. However, I want to reassure Queenslanders that my election as Speaker will not prevent me from continuing to be a strong advocate for the people I represent and for matters dear to my heart.

The exchange of letters between the Premier and myself clearly set out that I will support her government on all confidence motions unless there is evidence of corruption, illegal activities or like matters. And in relation to proposed changes to laws, I will vote as I choose irrespective of whether the proposal is from the Government, Opposition or Cross bench.

But, I want to make it very clear that if I vote against the government on numerous occasions, it cannot be seen as a trigger for a vote of no confidence in the Government.

I welcome the media back to the Chamber. The new media access rules have been arrived at after reference to other parliaments.

I acknowledge the work of my predecessor the Member for Maroochydore and previous Speakers who have worked hard at strengthening the function and capacity of our parliament.

Welcome to returning members and a special welcome to the 35 new members. While I have no doubt there are experienced people in your parties to guide you, the Clerk of Parliament Neil Laurie is always available and my door will always be open to you.

Thank you sincerely for the great honour and privilege you have conferred on me today.