



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRIVILEGE

SPEECH

Thursday, 6 June 2013

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Thursday, 6 June 2013
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Questioner
Speaker Abbott, Tony, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (15:48): I apologise to the House for interrupting this important debate. But, as members would recall, a while ago in this chamber a matter of public importance debate was not proceeded with, because the member who had submitted a letter calling for a definite matter of public importance to be debated absented himself from the chamber at the relevant time—and there is no mystery as to what time these matters are called on.

The member in question, the member for Throsby, obviously is not in any way incommoded. He is here in the chamber. He does not appear to be ill. He does not appear to have had any legitimate reason whatsoever for being absent from the chamber at the time when the matter of public importance debate was called on. Under the circumstances, it appears that the member for Throsby submitted his matter of public importance, deliberately intending to absent himself from the chamber. That is as grievous a breach of privilege by a member of this parliament as could possibly be imagined.

I have consulted with the Father of the House, who has been in this chamber for 41 years and provided 41 years of service to this House, and not once, on not one occasion, has someone submitted a matter of public importance for debate and then, without the intervention of any other proceedings of this chamber, been absent from the House.

What happened earlier today was an utter abuse of the procedures of this House. It was a scandalous breach of the dignity of this chamber. It put you, Madam Speaker, in an invidious position, in a humiliating and embarrassing position. We all know it was orchestrated by the Leader of the House, but the fact of the matter is that, by allowing himself to be duped by the Leader of the House in this way, the member for Throsby has been guilty of a grievous breach of privilege. I submit to you, Madam Speaker, and I would ask you to consider this matter carefully and report back to the House at the earliest possible opportunity. The dignity of this House must be respected. The rights of members of this chamber must be respected, and ruses and set-ups such as this should not be tolerated.

Mr Albanese: Speaker, I raise a point of order. Given that the former Leader of the House used to knock off the MPI on regular intervals, this is a farcical contribution. We should get on with the business before the House.