



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**  
**Turnbull Government**  
**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 3 December 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Perrett, Graham, MP

**Source** House  
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**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr PERRETT** (Moreton) (15:49): I grew up in country Queensland, where we only had one radio station, the ABC, and one TV station, the ABC. On those radio programs, every now and again, you would get the *Country Hour*. For one hour it would go through things that are important for the country. Well, we just had the country 10 minutes. Here we are, debating an MPI about government maintaining standards of integrity, and the member for Riverina treated it with contempt. He just read out a list of achievements connected loosely with the country. I cannot believe it, when we are talking about something as serious as this, Mr Deputy Speaker—and it is significant that you are sitting in that chair, the Speaker's chair. Let us go back to what this is about.

**Mr Ramsey:** Where is everybody?

**Mr PERRETT:** I take that comment from the member for Grey—'Where is everybody?' It was amazing. There was an MPI about those opposite, and there were three people in the chamber. No-one was prepared to defend the Special Minister of State—the person charged with the responsibility of looking after the integrity portfolios in this government. Unbelievable.

The member for Riverina's speech was 10 minutes wasted when instead he could have been talking about how important integrity is—especially today, 3 December. As I am sure the member for Mitchell would know, 161 years ago today we had the Eureka Rebellion, where people actually took an oath under the Southern Cross. Unfortunately, it was a situation where people died, including six soldiers and police officers. But people found something to believe in. They believed in that idea of being represented in parliament, so it is significant today that, when we had a chance for the government to defend the integrity of the Special Minister of State and to defend parliamentary integrity, instead we had 10 minutes of noise and nothing of substance whatsoever.

The reason I mentioned your chair, Mr Deputy Speaker, is that, as you well know, this building is designed with a basic cross principle. You theoretically look straight down the barrel to the President of the other place. So we can look straight from the 150 representatives here, under the flag, over to the state elected representatives, the senators. The other line of power to make that cross is from the people's part of the building straight through the Great Hall, under the flag, through the cabinet room to the Prime Minister sitting at his desk. Those two architectural lines intersect under the flag, with the building having grass on the roof, because we all know that the people are more important than the politicians—they are our bosses; they are on top of us. That is why it is important for the government to turn up to this MPI about government integrity. Instead they have deserted the field. When we had the representative from the executive speaking, there were three people in the chamber, and at best they were uninterested. It is unbelievable.

Unfortunately, we have a situation where the Special Minister of State facilitated an arrangement in relation to the diary of the Speaker of the House. We know how important the Speaker's role is. I have a copy of our Constitution here. There is no mention of the Prime Minister, but it sets out very clearly how we elect the Speaker. It does not matter what party the Speaker comes from, whether from the Liberal Party, the National Party or the LNP. I think Peter Slipper was a member of all three of those parties. I have never been a member of any of those parties. I know there is a little bit of fluidity on the benches opposite when it comes to switching from Liberal to National to LNP or whatever. I know what the Labor Party stands for. I believe in democracy and I believe in the Labor Party values.

Unfortunately, we have a government opposite where the Prime Minister is prepared to defend a minister—in fact, put him in charge of all of these decisions that involve the strongest possible ethics—and we have found him to be wanting.