



Parliament of Australia

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MEMBER FOR FISHER

THE HON PETER SLIPPER MP

8 December 2011

Open Letter to the Fisher Electorate

As you've undoubtedly heard, I have been given the great honour of being elected unopposed as the Speaker of the House of Representatives in the Australian Parliament. This role affords me, your local representative, the capacity to extend further my ability to showcase this extraordinary area I have proudly represented for the past 21 years.

I am doing this for a number of reasons.

I truly do intend to be an Independent Speaker in the Westminster tradition and I hope that this sets a precedent, which will be followed by all Speakers in future Australian Parliaments. I am looking forward to working with all members of the House, regardless of where they stand politically.

I strongly believe that the British tradition of an Independent Speaker strengthens the Parliament as an institution; and enables the Speaker to act without fear or favour and without being beholden to Government or Opposition. I note that on four separate occasions in September 2010, my friend Tony Abbott, the Leader of the Opposition, said that his preference was to have an Independent Speaker in the Westminster tradition. He now has one!

Consequently, after many years of membership of the National Party, the Liberal Party and most recently the Liberal National Party, I have relinquished my party membership to fulfil my undertaking to the Parliament. I must say that I have been encouraged in this opportunity to serve the Parliament in a new way by recent

actions over the last twelve months of some people in the Liberal National Party of Queensland. Rest assured however my conservative political principles have not altered.

I would also like to make a few points:

1. I place on record my admiration and respect for Mr Speaker Jenkins for the distinguished manner in which he discharged his duties in a hung Parliament with a minority Government.
2. Following the resignation of Mr Jenkins, as Deputy Speaker I felt an obligation to the House to accept the Speakership if nominated.
3. I would not however have become Speaker if this was necessary to ensure the Labor government was able to continue in office.
4. The Leader of the House, Anthony Albanese has done a brilliant job of ensuring the majority of the cross bench back the Government on all key votes.
5. It is now obvious to all observers that with the continuing support of the majority of the cross bench, the Government will serve its full term whether or not I became Speaker.
6. After my election as Deputy Speaker, as promised, I did not pair my vote with the Speaker and did not pledge support to the Government on matters of confidence and supply. My voting record discloses I always voted with the Coalition, including opposing both the carbon and mining taxes.
7. In discussions with Tony Abbott, in the presence of Liberal Director Brian Loughnane, Tony pledged support for my endorsement for the next election in either Fisher or Fairfax and I accepted his word. It gradually became apparent however to me there remained no place for me in the Liberal National Party of Queensland. I had the choice of being expelled or facing an early preselection I could not win and thus I was effectively pushed or bullied out of the party.

8. Tony has subsequently claimed (*Lateline* 30/11/11) that he tried to manage me out of the Parliament but this is contrary to his undertaking to me to support my pre-selection in Fisher or Fairfax. Perhaps he considered that even he had insufficient influence over the LNP.
9. I have been a long time friend of Tony Abbott and hope I remain so. I certainly wish him well in the future.

What does this mean going forward?

Frankly, I admit that I am not perfect and I have made mistakes, as some of the colourful stories about me reveal. I pledge however to continue to serve the Parliament and its members, and the Fisher electorate to the best of my ability.

I would like to thank my wife, Inge' and my children, as well as my staff and many loyal party members. I would also like to express my appreciation to colleagues and constituents for their support over my many years of service to date as a member of the Australian Parliament.

It is a very great privilege to represent this area both now and in future years as an Independent Speaker in the Westminster tradition.

In my role as Speaker, I will have the opportunity to showcase the Sunshine Coast and to highlight its needs. I intend to invite ambassadors, international delegations and senior ministers to our area; host and assist our extensive creative, tourism and business sectors in dealing with Government and advertising our local talents to a new and far reaching audience.

As an Independent Speaker, I will also be able to continue my efforts and dialogue with members on all sides of the Parliament to secure extra infrastructure to meet the needs of our rapidly growing population. We need further funding and support to:

- Upgrade the Bruce Highway to six lanes
- Expand the Sunshine Coast Airport
- Build a Regional Arts and Exhibition Centre
- Fund the construction of the Sunshine Coast University Hospital
- Progress the innovation and technology precinct at the University of Sunshine Coast
- Introduce a “Sea Change” funding pool for the Sunshine Coast and other Sea Change communities Australia-wide
- Construct a viewing platform at Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve, Maleny
- Secure the HMAS Tobruk for a second Sunshine Coast dive wreck
- Instal CCTV cameras to improve safety in Caloundra, Moololaba and Kawana
- Secure an F – 111 for the Queensland Air Museum at Caloundra

I would like to conclude by saying my door will always be open to all in the Fisher electorate. I look forward to working with everyone, regardless of politics because I think this country and its democracy is greater than any of us.

Yours sincerely



PETER SLIPPER, MP

Cartwright Centre, Cnr Nicklin Way & Pt Cartwright Drive, Buddina QLD 4575 – PO Box 1224, Buddina 4575

Telephone (07) 54444 888 Facsimile (07) 5452 6655

Email: Peter.Slipper.MP@aph.gov.au

Speaker’s Office, Suite RG44, Parliament House, PO Box 6022, Canberra ACT 2600, Australia

Telephone (02) 6277 4975 Facsimile (02) 6277 2050