

CONSIDERATION OF COMMITTEE REPORTS

Statement

HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West) [5.47 pm]: I want to reflect on some commentary that was made during consideration of committee reports yesterday. I am mindful to not reflect upon a decision of the house, so I will be careful. Yesterday I was the lead speaker for two committee reports. The first one had three minutes remaining for debate, and I sought to yield that time to the opposition. For context, that committee report had been considered by the house six times and there had already been two hours of debate. Of that two hours, Hon Nick Goiran spoke on three or four occasions, so for perhaps 30 or 40 minutes; the government had therefore spoken for the bulk of the remaining one hour and 30 minutes. It was a 10-page report. Hon Neil Thomson, who was a deputy chair of that committee, spoke on that report for only four minutes, back in November 2021. I sought to yield that time to the opposition but there were no takers, and the report was noted.

For the second report, I had six minutes remaining and I again sought to yield that time to the opposition; there were no takers, and the report was passed. By the time we got to consideration of the third report and Hon Nick Goiran joined the debate, there was some commentary made that I found particularly hurtful. Hon Nick Goiran accused the government of having a blasé attitude towards the committee reporting process and said something along the lines of, “It’s now time to have a debate.” The last time I checked, a debate involves two parties. If a government member is speaking and no opposition member stands up to speak, surely the debate is finished.

There was also some commentary about backbenchers leading debates, with members asking why ministers do not speak on committee reports and why members of certain committees speak. I assume the opposition can only dream of having the number of articulate, intelligent backbenchers that we have on this side of the house.

Again, there was a little gibe about reading reports. Hon Nick Goiran noted that I read a speech relating to a report and the government’s response. He also knows that I know how to read financial statements. We have heard these constant gibes during the whole time I have been in the forty-first Parliament that perhaps the backbenchers on the government side do not know how to read, comprehend or understand reports. Quite frankly, I find that offensive. It borders on some kind of intellectual snobbery, suggesting that perhaps we are not as well educated. Hon Lorna Harper noted that she is certainly not a lawyer. Nor am I. I left school at 15 to work full time, due to my family’s financial circumstances. I find this constant gibling about the fact that we have not read or understood reports particularly offensive.

The backbenchers in this place are amazing. They have every right to stand up and speak on committee reports, particularly when they are members of the said committee. I would have loved to have heard Hon Neil Thomson speak about a particular committee report but he was out of the chamber on urgent parliamentary business. He was the deputy chair of that committee.

I want to conclude by saying that I was quite hurt by the constant barrage of critique against backbenchers.