

Honourable speaker,

I rise to support the motion of censure of the premier, knowing that is a serious and (I believe) unprecedented action.

And I can genuinely say, honourable speaker, I do this sadly & reluctantly, But after much reflection, my conscience is clear.

The Premier's threats that this censure motion will lead to instability, notwithstanding, this is a proper response to the clear failings.

And let me tell the Premier, you truly need to get used to minority government - as so much of Europe has for four decades - and realise that when you fail to live up to standards of good government, you need to take the medicine and move on.

And move on we must - and move on you must.

So, Honourable speaker, one cannot treat this matter lightly - just as I have not treated the matters of two former ministers lightly when they were obliged to step down from their roles.

I'm not interested in political scalps, or in what the Premier alleges is "grubby politics".

Despite his apologies & his concession that his actions have not been what should have been expected, his attitude today stands in stark contrast to his aggressive attitude in parliament this week.

Premier, You cannot dig yourself a deep hole, fall into it and then blame everyone else when you can't climb out.

Put at its most benign - with the very best will in the world - the Premier's apparent failure of due diligence and curiosity in important matters has landed us here today.

It's clear, too, that the Premier - or someone close to him and to his knowledge - coördinated the response of all his ministers in Estimates without taking proper advice from any legal authority - such as the Solicitor General.

His claim in this debate to have exercised leadership and personal judgment in making decisions about issues he concedes are complex legal matters is, in my opinion, inexcusable.

So this whole exercise - this debate and whatever political damage it does - is entirely of the Premier's own making.

The responsibility for the opprobrium it may attract from members of the Tasmanian public lies entirely at his own doorstep.

Hon Speaker, just ask has actually happened over these past few weeks that have led to two ministers standing down?

This is what's happened:

Parliamentarians have held ministers to account for their actions .

Parliamentarians have demanded transparency in government.

Parliamentarians have insisted the Westminster Conventions be rigorously applied.

Parliamentarians are now holding the Premier to account for his actions and his lack of action.

Parliamentarians, in other words, have done their job.

The damage to parliament, the loss of two ministers, the damage to stability, the damage to government business, the damage to Tasmania - if there is damage - is entirely of the government's own making and the Premier carries the responsibility for that damage as leader of his government.

Like the Premier, I have no wish to be taking this time out from normal parliamentary business but this is where we have been led, whether we like it or not.

Now, Hon Speaker, the history of politics in this island tells us one thing with absolutely certainty:

the Liberals would have acted in exactly the same way had exactly the same thing should similar circumstances have arisen while they were in opposition.

I believe the Premier has himself has deployed the political blowtorch in the past.

And, Hon Speaker, the confected rage of the Treasurer at the very start of the motion that triggered this debate rings as hollow as his leader's.

He deploys the tactics of diversion in the clear belief that attack is the best form of defence.

It's not.

In this case it'd be contrition. And accepting the consequences.

Hon Speaker,

I paraphrase the words of Robert Menzies already alluded to by the Treasurer:

To defeat our political enemies is an outcome to be desired but never to destroy them.

Well, hon speaker, I disagree with both the Treasurer and the former prime minister. In minority government, the focus has to be on working with the parliament across political lines - not looking across the chamber and perceiving enemies but recognising collaborators.

But, in my view, first job of an opposition - even before working to seize the reins of government - is to hold a government to account.

And that, honourable speaker, is what has happened and it's only what's happening.

Honourable speaker,

I am focused on the same core issues upon which I was elected and one of those was a strong - a very strong - emphasis on integrity, accountability and transparency. And that, Hon Speaker, not only lies at the heart of good government but it lies at the heart of trust in government by the people of Tasmania.

Even if I accept that the Premier is remorseful of his failings - and I would very much like to believe he is - those failures have inevitably reinforced the views of so many Tasmanians whose faith in government have sunk to an historic low.

the Premier cannot simply say sorry, express contrition and move on - there have to be consequences.

And - I might add - the best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour and this censure is a matter of drawing a line in the sand and saying: This must stop.

hon Speaker,

For all the changes made to transparency and accountability in recent years - which I acknowledge - these past few weeks have further damaged the reputation of government and - sadly - of parliamentarians.

these past few weeks cannot be viewed in isolation from a frequently sad saga of Tasmanian politics.

This island has a history of political cronyism, a reputation for entitled elites looking after their own regardless of the benefits or detriments to Tasmania.

It's not just a widespread public perception, it's been studied academically.

It is not for nothing that the Centre for the Study of Corruption at the University of Sussex in the UK has published three articles penned by Robyn Lewis & Professor Michael Johnston under the title Tasmania, the Corruption Isle - with a question mark.

These three articles are entitled : "Tasmania's Hidden Tax: Elite Cartel Corruption and its Real Costs".

"Reforming Governance and the Quiet Capture of Democracy in Tasmania".

And "Elite Cartel Corruption in Tasmania - the nature of the game"

As these three papers make clear, there are many forms of systemic corruption that don't necessarily mean you break the law - but forms of corruption that enable an entitled elite - in the authors' words an "elite cartel" - to benefit those within the inner circle to the detriment of the greater good.

Honourable speaker, I seek leave of the House to table these three papers.

Honourable speaker,

These three short papers, in more general Terms, and within a broad spread of public opinion, sadly reflect a wide cohort of Tasmanian views of their political leaders and their government - and it doesn't matter who is sitting on the Treasury benches ... that the view predominates.

That's the landscape in which events have unfolded these past few weeks.

By his own admission, the premier failed to properly interrogate issues arising around former minister Ogilvie.

He has said, in hindsight, that he “should have interrogated the issue further” and ensured a more appropriate response.

But Hon Speaker, that is the job.

Due diligence is not optional.

It is the fundamental obligation of a Premier when a minister’s honesty to Parliament is in question.

Even more concerning is that, despite questions mounting for months the Premier did not act decisively to ensure that the record was corrected. Instead, this Parliament was left in the dark until the issue became unavoidable.

Equally serious, During Budget Estimates, the Premier and his ministers refused to answer dozens of straightforward questions about what they knew and when. They did so on the basis of supposed legal constraints—yet it has now been confirmed that no formal legal advice had been sought to justify that refusal.

The Premier came into this Parliament and said he could not answer questions, citing legal sensitivities—but did not even seek advice from the Solicitor-General as to whether that position was valid.

The Premier has offered apologies.

But apologies do not substitute for governance.

And they do not undo the pattern we have seen: a reluctance to ask hard questions, a reluctance to demand full answers, and a reluctance to provide them to this House.

In a Westminster system, the responsibility of a Premier is clear.

If a minister misleads Parliament, they must correct the record. If there is any doubt, the Premier must ensure that doubt is resolved immediately and transparently. On both counts, this Premier has fallen short.

Hon speaker,
this motion is necessary.

I do not approach it as a political exercise, but as a statement of principle: that this Parliament expects ministers—and the Premier who leads them—to meet the highest standards of integrity, diligence, and transparency.

There is absolutely no doubt - none at all, Hon speaker - that this situation was avoidable.

It was foreseeable. And it was, ultimately, the result of choices made at the highest level of this government.

There's no pleasure in supporting this motion.

I urge the Premier to take this medicine, unpalatable though it is.

And I urge him to cease his warnings about instability in this minority government because those statements, in themselves, will cause instability.

On behalf of the many constituents who have contacted me - and on behalf of them many, many Tasmanians who over the past few years have raised their concerns of honesty, trust and transparency, I support this motion and intend to draw a line under what has become a truly sorry saga.

Honourable speaker, I commend this motion to the House.