



LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

THE HON. TONY ABBOTT MHR

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR WARRINGAH

STATEMENT ON PETER SLIPPER MP

The Speaker is the presiding officer of the House of Representatives and is responsible for the orderly conduct of the House and the maintenance of standards of behaviour and integrity.

It is a very senior position within our Parliament and an office that should command respect.

It is important for our Parliament that the Speaker have the respect of colleagues and the trust of the community.

There are now very serious allegations against the current speaker, Mr Peter Slipper.

These allegations concern the sexual harassment of a staff member in Mr Slipper's office.

In court documents lodged yesterday, there are further serious allegations regarding potentially criminal misuse of taxpayer funds and breaches of entitlements.

For any parliamentarian, let alone the Speaker, these would be very serious allegations.

Against the Speaker, such allegations go to the integrity of the highest parliamentary office in the House of Representatives.

While Mr Slipper is entitled to the presumption of innocence, these allegations unquestionably have the potential to damage the reputation of the office of Speaker and the standing of the Parliament.

It is therefore incumbent on the Prime Minister, who used her numbers to install Mr Slipper as Speaker late last year, to require him to stand aside until these matters are concluded before the courts.

The Australian Federal Police must immediately investigate these new allegations relating to criminal misuse of taxpayer funded entitlements.

It is untenable that a Member of Parliament facing serious allegations of sexual harassment and criminal misuse of entitlements should hold one of the most senior positions in the Australian Parliament.

In the same way that ministers in the past have been stood down from the ministry while matters were being investigated, the Prime Minister must ensure that the Speaker stand aside until this matter is resolved.

We now have a Government in Canberra that is dependent for its survival on two Members of Parliament, Craig Thomson and now Peter Slipper, who both face investigation over very serious allegations.

This is a tawdry state of affairs, to say the least.

We are a good country presently let down by a bad government with poor leadership.

The Opposition cannot support Mr Slipper continuing to hold the office of Speaker while these matters are being investigated.

To maintain integrity in our public life, the Prime Minister must act today.

It was the Prime Minister who effectively made Peter Slipper the Speaker less than six months ago. And while she has failed to show leadership over the ongoing Craig Thomson saga, the Speaker is no mere backbencher.

As the person who commands a parliamentary majority, Peter Slipper is her Speaker.

The Prime Minister must ensure that no further damage is done to the reputation of one of the most senior offices in the Parliament and she must act today to ensure that Mr Slipper stands down while this matter is dealt with in the courts.

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