



Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Parliament of Queensland

Media Statement

Thursday 28 October 2010

Speakers' Corner launch celebrates free speech

Speakers' Corner – a public space dedicated to encouraging free speech – was unveiled today outside the main entrance of Queensland's Parliament House.

The Speaker of Parliament John Mickel dedicated Speakers' Corner, a legacy project to mark the Queensland Parliament's 150th anniversary year.

"The Parliament is our State's embodiment of democratic government", Mr Mickel said. "One of the basic freedoms in a democracy is freedom of speech, and that is what Speakers' Corner, located at the main entrance to the Parliament, is all about."

Mr Mickel said Speakers' Corner was a designated area where people could gather to voice their views and concerns about matters of importance to them.

"Speakers' Corner is located in the George Street forecourt of Parliament House – an area where people have traditionally rallied or protested about issues of the day. It is a place where the public are encouraged to engage in open and vigorous debate.

"I urge Queenslanders to use this place to have their say, but to do so in a manner that is respectful to others.

"The parliament is a place where elected representatives of the people gather and use words and arguments to debate laws and advocate the interests of their constituents.

"I'd like to see members of the public using words and arguments at Speakers' Corner in a way which ventilates issues and contributes to a better understanding of a wide range of issues which will benefit from public discourse and debate," Mr Mickel said.

Mr Mickel said a commemorative plaque at Speakers' Corner plaque contained a quote about respectful speech that was made by the Parliament's first Speaker, Gilbert Elliott, during the first sitting of the Legislative Assembly on 22 May 1860.

Speaker Elliott's quote states:

"I would urge on honourable members mutual forbearance and self-control, and the necessity of not taking exception to words and expressions which might bear a very different interpretation to that which at the time they might be disposed to attach to them."

"These very apt words voiced in 1860 ring true today and describe the Parliament's aspirations for Speakers' Corner," Mr Mickel said.

"It is my hope that Speakers' Corner becomes known as a place for vigorous and passionate debate. However, in the traditions of our State's system of peaceful democracy, and echoing the words of my predecessor from 1860, I urge on people using this place mutual forbearance and self-control."

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