



23 May 2018

## Hon Gerry Brownlee

Member of Parliament for Ilam

Mr Speaker,

I write to express the National Party's serious concerns about your chairing of the House and your role in negative stories about the National Party in the media.

On 9 May, you ruled during Question Time that a National Party MP had made a "sexist" remark about the Prime Minister. You did not confirm what was said but added that you would review the tape.

Then on 15 May, Newshub reported that a male National MP had called the Prime Minister a "stupid little girl."

The source behind this specific claim was anonymous.

As part of the story, a number of National's male MPs were asked whether they had called out the remark and all confirmed they had not.

All have also said they did not hear it.

I would note that international media then also reported on the story.

Today you have confirmed to media that it was you who heard those specific words, and while you could not confirm it upon reviewing the tape, you stood by the fact the remark was made.

Media outlets have also reviewed the tape and cannot confirm those words were said.

The role of the Speaker is to ensure Parliament runs effectively, taking a neutral role to ensure the Opposition can hold the Government to account.

Promoting stories about events which cannot be verified and which reflect badly on the Opposition is unacceptable from the Speaker.

On top of this, we have also repeatedly made known our concerns about the way you are running Question Time.

Your arbitrary taking of questions from the Opposition and the disruption to proceedings are seriously limiting our ability to do our job of holding the Government to account.

In the past few weeks you have also called an MP a "naughty child" and allowed a National MP to be called a "fool" without intervening.



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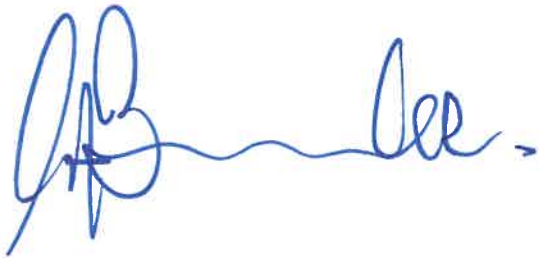
If the rules are not clear and the rulings not consistent we cannot effectively do our job.

As a result our confidence in you as Speaker has been significantly shaken.

This is not an acceptable position for you to be in.

We expect a full explanation from you about your role in pushing this story in the media before the House resumes at 2pm tomorrow.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gerry Brownlee', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gerry Brownlee  
Shadow Leader of the House

Cc Parliamentary Press Gallery