

## The Sketch: Flight of fancy as Turnbull has Captain Fantasy in sights



Malcolm Turnbull in question time yesterday.

[James Jeffrey](#), The Australian, 12:00AM May 26, 2017

For someone who's copped criticism for using a dozen words when two would suffice, it must have been nice for Malcolm Turnbull to try out the accusation on someone else. It happened early in question time, the relaxed body language and sparkling eyes letting all know a Turnbull flight of fancy was in the offing and the tower had cleared it for takeoff.

Having already labelled Bill Shorten a "captain of fantasy" — which raises some troubling images — Turnbull got going.

"When we talk about fairness, what could be less fair than the 14 minutes of torture the Leader of the Opposition delivered to his own caucus today. A cross between Fidel Castro and Kevin Rudd, he went on and on for 14 minutes to his unfortunate crew. It only came to the end when it was interrupted by repeated snores and dull thuds from the members falling off their chairs."

It's possible a look of uncomfortable recognition flashed across a number of Coalition faces, though it's equally possible it was just a trick of light.

After an interruption to a Dorothy Dixier from the member for Tangney, Ben Morton, Speaker Tony Smith invited "the member for Moreton" to repeat his question. The member for Moreton — Labor MP Graham Perrett, who recently gained global fame by laughing his way to a black eye — looked surprised, leapt to his feet, buttoned his jacket and was all set to roll when Smith realised his mistake.

Barnaby Joyce suggested Anthony Albanese was in “splendid isolation”, an unexpected evocation of British foreign policy under Benjamin Disraeli and Lord Salisbury. (The former member for Herbert, Ewen Jones, would mention Splendid Isolation is also a Warren Zevon song. But we digress.)

Scott Morrison plumped for a more avian theme as he had a crack at Chris Bowen: “The shadow treasurer has become the banks’ parrot, squawking on cue, ‘Who is a pretty boy then?’ ”

But if Morrison was on team Tweetybird, Infrastructure Minister Darren Chester was more Sylvester, suggesting Labor was a bunch of “little pussycats”.

Above in the public gallery, rows of immaculately behaved schoolchildren watched proceedings with the same expressions they might wear when forced to eat brussels sprouts. Sadly, they’d left by the time Urban Infrastructure Minister Paul Fletcher rose to give one of his more bravura performances, a rhythmically bellowed assessment of Labor’s record that featured almost as much “zero” as Pearl Harbor. He got so worked up, his own colleagues began to roar, though whether they were shouting support or urging Fletch to stop before he did himself a mischief wasn’t clear.

Throwing the switch to partypooping, the Speaker declared: “The minister’s time has concluded.”