



Speech by

BRUCE DAVIDSON

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Hansard 22 October 1998

PRIVILEGE

Ms M. O'Donnell

Mr DAVIDSON (Noosa—LP) (10.11 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. After the debate yesterday in this place on the report of Estimates Committee D, members will now be aware of the issue surrounding the appointment of Ms Margaret O'Donnell to the position of Director-General of the Department of Equity and Fair Trading. In the House on 4 August 1998, in response to a question without notice directed to the Premier by the Leader of the Opposition regarding appointments to senior executive positions within the Public Service, the Premier stated—

"... those positions will be filled on the basis of merit. People who had previously been appointed to the position of director-general on the basis of merit were eligible for reappointment, which is exactly how it is being done. If they had previously been appointed to one of those positions, they will be entitled to be reappointed; they have gone through a merit selection process and they were appointed on merit. It is that simple. Those who do not fit within that category will have their positions advertised. A number of those positions are now in the process of being advertised, such as that for Public Works and Housing. There is a string of them. That is the clear position."

That being the clear position, I was surprised at the appointment of Ms O'Donnell to the position of director-general, which was gazetted in Queensland Government Gazette No. 118 on 14 August 1998—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Noosa—

Mr DAVIDSON: I now table it for the information of honourable members.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am not sure that this is a matter of privilege.

Mr DAVIDSON: It is a misleading of the House by the Premier, Mr Speaker.

It should be noted that Ms O'Donnell has never been appointed to a director-general's position previously. This appointment was made, despite the fact that the position was never advertised and a formal selection process was not conducted. Given the previous employment history of Ms O'Donnell, it would have been necessary to adhere to this process to be in compliance with the Premier's appointment process outlined in this House, as I mentioned previously.

Based on this apparent breach of the publicly stated appointment process, I inquired of the Minister for Fair Trading during the time allocated to non-Government members at the Estimates Committee D hearing whether the appointment of Ms O'Donnell and the process used for her selection had the support of the Premier. The Minister informed the committee: "Absolutely". Given that the Minister advised the committee that the Premier supported the appointment of Ms O'Donnell despite non-compliance with the process that he himself outlined, it is clear that the Premier has misled this House. I therefore ask that this matter be brought to the attention of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee.
