



Speech by

GRANT MUSGROVE

MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD

Hansard 20 October 1998

AVERAGE AGE OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Mr MUSGROVE (Springwood—ALP) (12.18 p.m.): I welcome the announcement today of the new Federal shadow Cabinet. I think members will agree that it is a youthful, reinvigorated team poised to take Government at the next election. In particular, it has a very strong representation from Queensland Labor members. Clearly, that new shadow Ministry, having an average age of 45, is the future of Australia. In comparison, despite a substantial reshuffle, the tired old Howard Government still has an average age of 50. In this place, the average age of members, calculated from data published in the biographical guide to members that was distributed to electorate offices recently, is 48.1 years.

The member for Tablelands has complained long and loud about this place being ageist, particularly when the Speaker, the Honourable Ray Hollis, was elected to his high office. Of course, he was elected to that high office because of his experience and many years of good service to this place. I rise to inform members that this is in fact not the case as far as Labor members are concerned. The average age of Government members is 45.95 years, compared to the average age of coalition members which is 51.78 years. On average, Labor members are some five years younger than members opposite.

Mr Briskey: And more intelligent, too.

Mr MUSGROVE: And, dare I say, possibly a little more good looking, energetic and enthusiastic with a genuine vigour for government.

Mr Briskey: And caring.

Mr MUSGROVE: Indeed. Clearly, this is a Government for today and for the next millennium. This is a Government of energy and enthusiasm, not a Government that is past its prime and waiting to be put out to pasture. I trust that members of the coalition will lobby the Howard Government to ensure that there are enough nursing home places for them in the not-too-distant future.

A Government member: They'll have to pay.

Mr MUSGROVE: Indeed they will. Of course, members of the National Party are somewhat more mature than the rest of us, with an average age of 52.08 years. However, they had better not hobble off to retirement too soon because, while National Party shadow Ministers have an average age of 48.08 years—somewhat older than their Labor counterparts—the National Party backbench, that is, the future of the National Party, is a very fatigued 56.45 years. That is unbelievable. The future of the National Party in this place, its backbench, is some eight years older than the current shadow Ministry.

Mr Hamill: Is this a regression analysis?

Mr MUSGROVE: I will come to that. I was pleased that during the Estimates Committee B hearing the Minister for Emergency Services informed members that CPR training will be made available to all members as part of the CPR 2000 initiative. I inform members of the coalition that I will put petty politics aside and avail them of CPR should they require resuscitation. I wish members opposite good health in their old age. If a member of the National Party shadow Ministry were to drop off, chances are that he or she would be replaced by a somewhat older member. Sadly, we all know what that means: as we grow old, we are not quite up to the responsibilities of our office at a certain point—some members more than others. Our memories may fail us. For example, the member for Southport cannot remember whether or not he was aware that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority trust fund was heading for a \$118m deficit. Thankfully, the member for Surfers Paradise, the

Leader of the Opposition, has put him out to pasture, dumping him from the frontbench before he forgets how to tie his shoelaces. I am sure that members can see the problem facing the Leader of the Opposition. From his own party he must choose between members who are past their use-by dates and those who are starting to reek.

The average age of Liberal Party members in this place is 51, compared, once again, with the average age of Labor members of 45.95 years. Members may well wonder how Liberal Party shadow Ministers stack up against their backbench. Does the Liberal Party leader, the member for Moggill, face the same dilemma as his National Party counterpart, the member for Surfers Paradise? The answer is: yes and no. The Liberal Party in this place is generationally and intellectually static. The average age of Liberal Party members is 51. The average age of Liberal shadow Ministers is 51 precisely.

Mr Hamill: It's a small sample.

Mr MUSGROVE: The average age of Liberal backbenchers is also 51. When calculating those figures to the second decimal place, I was struck by the homogeneity of Liberal Party members. As of 8 October, how could the average age of Liberal Party shadow Ministers, the backbench and all Liberal Party members generally be precisely 51.00? The honourable Treasurer has hit the nail on the head. I checked the figures, I rechecked them and I came up with the same result: 51.00. As I am sure the Treasurer would appreciate, that is statistically quite unlikely. How is it possible? The answer is that there are so few Liberal Party members left in this place. Of course, the member for Clayfield, who is having a nice yak at the moment, lost his little youth wing in the last State election, including the barrel boy from Springwood. I am sure he looks forward to a good conference as he faces that loss.

While the National Party may have a backbench that is starting to dribble, at least it has enough members to achieve a bit of diversity. Of course, some members are particularly keen to cling to their youth long past their prime. I must say that I chuckled when I saw that the member for Hervey Bay used his electorate car allowance to purchase a great big Corvette. Unfortunately the member is not present, but I wish him well in his great big car that contrasts so well with his physical and mental attributes. Some of us go doorknocking and some of us have street stalls, but the member for Hervey Bay just goes cruising.

Of course, the member for Tablelands claims that the Government is ageist for not allowing him to become Speaker in his first Parliament at the tender age of 25 years. As the youngest member of the Government and, may I also say, the youngest member of a mainstream political party that is not in fact a company, I can tell him that the important thing to remember in this place is that we are a diverse group of representatives of the Queensland community. I hope that the member will not find it condescending or ageist when I say to him: sit down, listen and you might in fact learn something.
