



Speech by

**Mrs E. CUNNINGHAM**

**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

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Hansard 6 August 1998

### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS**

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—IND) (6.26 p.m.): Up until just prior to the commencement of this debate, I had dealt only with the motion as it stood on the Notice Paper. It proposed an amendment to the Sessional Orders. This motion, which was moved by the member for Indooroopilly, brought forward the time in which the private member's Bill is laid on the table in the proposed amendment from 90 days to 60 days.

Having regard to the closeness of the numbers in this House and taking in good faith the Premier's undertakings to ensure that private members' Bills get a fair and reasonable hearing, I consider that laying a Bill on the table for 60 days—two months—is a reasonable amount of time and that after that the Bill should get precedence so that the matter can be considered again, particularly on the basis of the make-up of the House.

I still support very much the intent of the motion moved by the member for Indooroopilly and I will be supporting it. However, if the understanding had been reached between the Leader of Government Business and the Leader of Opposition Business that it would be better to have the matter debated next week and that, despite that understanding, this motion was moved by the Leader of Opposition Business, then that is disappointing to say the least. It would not be the first time that it has happened, but it is disappointing.

There needs to be a way to ensure that filibustering during debate on these private members' Bills does not effectively stop such Bills being dealt with. Under the proposal in the Sessional Orders, it would be possible to filibuster to the point at which a private member's Bill, having laid on the table for 90 days, would be debated only on subsequent sitting Wednesdays. It would be possible for quite a substantial period of time to elapse before that Bill could ever reach the voting stage. That concerns me a great deal.

Equally, I think the problem that the Premier raised about the possibility of non-Government members glutting the Notice Paper to effectively block Government business could be dealt with by moving a motion that is available to the Chamber, and that is a guillotine motion, which I really hate. I am sure that there would be ways of the Parliament reaching a consensus to ensure that Government business was not unnecessarily disadvantaged whilst still allowing a fair and reasonable opportunity for debate by non-Government members, that is, for them to introduce private members' Bills. Again, while I support the intent of Mr Beanland's motion—and I will be supporting it—it would be disappointing if, in these early stages, those more casual understandings that I know the Leaders of Government and Opposition Business have come to over a long period of time have been compromised.

There was a lot of talk during the last election campaign about the role of members in this Chamber, whether they be in a major party or not, and the necessary ability of those members to play an effective part in the decision making in this State. As far as legislation is concerned, for non-Government members a private member's Bill is the only available opportunity to have an impact, other than the amendment of clauses during debate. The close numbers have ensured that non-Government members have successfully moved and had passed a lot of amendments to Bills and so have affected the legislative stream. But, again, I think it is very important that we consider in the House

tonight the very likely possibility that Sessional Orders could be structured in such a way that private members' Bills would never come to their conclusion.

I understand that even if tonight's motion is successful we still have to debate its provisions as a sessional order. This is merely indicating the wishes of the House. We will be having this debate again, but I guess that this motion foreshadows the intent of the non-Government members in relation to amendments to the Sessional Orders.

I support the intent of this motion and I support the right of non-Government members to have their input through legislation, but it would be disappointing if contact across the Chamber has been compromised.

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