



Speech by

PAUL LUCAS, MLA

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Hansard 5 August 1998

SPORTING SHOOTERS

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (6.46 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak in support of the amendment moved by the Honourable the Minister. I first take the opportunity to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your election to the position of Speaker and to also welcome the Chairman of Committees and congratulate him on his elevation to that position.

I am more than happy to speak in support of the amendment, because it is very important that the Government takes the opportunity to make its position clear in relation to the sporting shooting fraternity. Labor is not an anti-gun party; Labor is a responsible gun ownership party. Labor is in favour of responsible gun ownership.

There are about 50,000 members of gun associations in Australia. The Belmont Rifle Range, which is nearby to my electorate, has operated for many years in a most responsible fashion. I have never received any complaints about it. A lot of Labor Party members in fact shoot there. It is a very responsible gun club.

We are in favour of people who want to responsibly own guns. As well as legitimate sporting shooters, there are many other people who have legitimate interests in Australia. Not everybody owns a gun. In fact, the majority of people do not own guns, and they are extremely concerned. The Prime Minister, with the bipartisan support of the then Premier and the Opposition, would not have been able to implement the national uniform gun legislation without substantial community support.

Just as we are responsible for the interests of legitimate gun owners, we are responsible for the interests of all Australians. Australians are very concerned about incidents such as that which occurred at Port Arthur, and they are very concerned about the gun society such as that which exists in the United States. I have the great pleasure of knowing that in our country we do not have hand gun deaths second after second. We do not have to explain to people what it is like when someone is murdered on the streets through the irresponsible use of guns. That is what the national uniform gun laws are about and that is what the Labor Party Government is about. I would presume that all thinking members of this House are similarly in favour of them.

It is very important to remember that the legislation was bipartisan national legislation. The motion those opposite support is one moved by a member of the former Government that introduced and supported uniform gun legislation. If those opposite do not like that legislation, then perhaps they should move an amendment to their motion.

Mr Knuth: You supported it.

Mr LUCAS: I certainly supported it, and Beazley supported it as well. That is dead right.

With this national gun legislation, there has been a substantial increase in gun ownership and gun club membership, as one would expect. That is a good thing, because with gun clubs comes training, supervision and the safe operation of firearms in a supervised environment. We have a very proud history in Australia of Olympic competition and sporting shooting competition. I would have thought that those members who are members of gun clubs would support the legislation. It has increased the membership of gun clubs. It has enhanced the viability of legitimate sporting shooters organisations and increased their capacity to be able to provide proper training for their members.

The motion itself and the Opposition's refusal to accept the amendment is churlish and misleading. There is no issue between either side of the House in relation to this matter. The Government has indicated clearly that it will be retaining the committee, and the committee will be fulfilling its function. It does not select sites; it advises the Minister on suitable sites. We are stuck with the situation that the Commonwealth has exited from rifle range licensing, and Queensland has the responsibility to cater for the needs of those legitimate sporting shooters.

We now need to provide those facilities. We cannot do that with current rifle range numbers and an increase in the number of sporting shooters from 10,000 to 50,000. The desperate promises made by the last Government are no good. It is no good to make desperate promises, worry about the law and get the facts right later. Lasting action is needed. We need to take the community with us. Our State forests have biodiversity and logging values. There are populations nearby. The forests have ecological value and there is also a need for buffer zones. The communities surrounding those forests also have a right to be consulted, and that is what the Government is about.

We will put into place rifle ranges that everybody accepts, not rifle ranges that the community does not want or rifle ranges that sporting shooters are not happy with. It has to be something that everybody comes on board with. That is what this Government is about. This Government is not about dividing and conquering. It is not about taking out the meat cleaver and cleaving off parts of society, as members on the other side of the House like to do; it is about governing for all Queenslanders and their aspirations. Let us face the facts. Even if members on the other side of the House do not want to face the facts, we will. We will legislate and this Government will take decisions in the interests of all Queenslanders.
