



Speech by

**Hon. R. WELFORD**

**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

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Hansard 5 August 1998

### **SPORTING SHOOTERS**

**Hon. R. J. WELFORD** (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (6.16 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Omit all words after 'and', second occurring, and insert the following—

'recognises the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Natural Resources has retained the Ministerial Advisory Panel which will advise the Minister on the availability and suitability of State lands for the use of recreational shooting clubs.' "

As the member for Warrego has just pointed out, the State Parliament passed amendments to the weapons legislation in this State to comply with the national regime for the regulation of certain kinds of firearms. It is true that the Labor Party supported those amendments, as it committed itself to supporting the national regime. In that respect we share with our colleagues in the Opposition the same concerns and the same responsibility to address the impacts of that legislation on people who own firearms and wish to continue using them. That is why this amendment makes the point that the attempt by the Opposition spokesperson, the member for Keppel, to raise this as a political issue in this debate tonight is such a folly.

Just as it shared responsibility in this House for changing the weapons law, the Labor Party also shared the commitment of the previous Government to look sympathetically at the impacts of those changes in the law upon people who own firearms or were joining gun clubs. As has already been indicated, those people who wanted to retain and use their firearms had two options. The options were to obtain permission to use their firearms on private property or to join a gun club or a sporting shooters club.

What Opposition members have tried to make an issue of tonight has never been an issue. Prior to the election, Opposition members met with members of the Sporting Shooters Association and indicated that, if elected to Government, the Labor Party would look sympathetically at options for providing public land for sporting clubs involved with rifles and other firearms. That is exactly what we are doing. I have not removed the ministerial advisory panel, as the member for Keppel tried to indicate. He is playing a pretty silly game of cheap politics trying to make political headway out of this, because we are maintaining the ministerial advisory panel and maintaining the opportunity for sporting club input into the identification of suitable land.

The only extent of my review of the previous situation was to make the point—which the members who are now in Opposition are not prepared to confess—that they recognised that it was a very, very difficult problem to identify unallocated State land or, indeed, suitable locations and State forest. The member for Warrego knocked back one site for what I believe to be very sensible reasons. His decision was subsequently overturned by the member for Warwick. As a result of that somersault, we have been put in a very difficult position with local communities. I will not go into the specifics of that instance. The general point is that the Labor Party is sympathetic to the impact on sporting shooters associations.

Through the ministerial advisory panel we will maintain the club input into the identification of suitable sites. We need to recognise that there are a number of factors that need to be considered, and that was recognised by the panel. Obviously, we would encourage that sporting clubs try to group

together in regions so that, if sites are identified, they can all use the same facilities. In that way, we will not need multiple sites all over the State. We also ask sporting clubs to channel their applications through the advisory panel, so we have a central process for assessing those issues. A range of issues, including native title, conservation and the economic interests of forests need to be taken into account.

Time expired.

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