



Speech by

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Hansard 27 August 1998

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth— ALP) (Minister for Communication and Information and Minister for Local Government, Planning, Regional and Rural Communities) (1.56 a.m.), in reply: I wish to refer to a couple of points raised by the Leader of the Opposition. The point the Leader of the Opposition just made was that Sessional Orders would not allow private members' Bills to take precedence. The amendment moved by the Opposition says that a private member's Bill will take precedence of Government business.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: The Opposition's amendment actually said that it would take precedence on subsequent sitting days. What the Leader of the Opposition said earlier is incorrect. We need to be careful about that. The Leader of the Opposition made a point about private members' Bills being introduced later this year and not being debated because what he called the sausage machine will occur in October. Any private member's Bill that is introduced in October will not necessarily be debated under the Opposition's 60-day proposition because the House will have risen before——

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: That destroys the Leader of the Opposition's argument. I am not taking issue with the Leader of the Opposition on this matter. It is 5 to 2 in the morning and the reason we are sitting is because members can talk here as long as they like. In the six-odd years that I have been Leader of the House I have not once gagged a debate. I have always believed that if members want to talk in this Parliament, let them talk. I have never tried to stop people from talking.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: Come on! We are talking about debates on legislation. The Leader of the Opposition made a comment about his Bill and told us how important it was. Yesterday I dealt with amendments to the Integrated Planning Act which I think were more important than the Leader of the Opposition's Bill. We did that in about 20 minutes, so 90 minutes could have been sufficient.

I put to the Leader of the Opposition that the debate we started yesterday and which went until 1 o'clock this morning could probably have been done in about two hours. If we took all the speeches and cut out all the repetition we may have ended up with a two-hour debate. However, we had repetition. We heard people saying exactly the same thing over and over. It is their right to say it and I respect that right. I am not going to criticise members for that.

That is why I believe the proposition I put forward in relation to the private members' Bills, which has now laid on the table for 14 days, is the correct one. I have given a commitment that we will debate it on the Wednesday after the Budget after we debate the transport legislation. The Opposition can debate the transport legislation for as long as it likes and then the Leader of the Opposition can debate his Bill for as long as he likes. We will finish it that day, that night or the next morning. We will then come to the member for Nicklin's private member's Bill. I have said to the member for Nicklin that we will ensure that his private member's Bill is debated. I hope he will trust me as much as the Leader of the Opposition trusts me. I have never broken my word to the Leader of the Opposition. He has to admit that.

I am trying to do something different here, but I think back to 1990 when I went to a meeting of the Standing Orders Committee and proposed that we bring in a whole new system of questions. The Leader of the Opposition was Deputy Leader of the Opposition at that time and he looked at me and said, "What are you trying to do to us?" He rejected it. He would not cop it. He would not allow us to bring in a new system of questions.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: That was the day when we offered that system and the Leader of the Opposition would not accept it. We did not introduce the system. We waited six years, and we introduced it, and it is the same system as that which is operating now. Members opposite operated under it for two and a half years. It allows up to 2,000 extra questions a year. But members opposite rejected it because they were suspicious that the socialists were trying to put something over them.

I believe that members need to have a bit of honesty and a bit of trust. We have given a commitment that private members' Bills will be allowed to be debated. I will stick by that, even if it is at this hour of the morning.
