



Speech by

Mr R. QUINN

MEMBER FOR MERRIMAC

Hansard 17 August 1999

CENSURE OF MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.36 p.m.): The Government's defence of the member for Ipswich tonight is based on the premise that we are trying to pre-empt the findings of the CJC and the Auditor-General. Nothing could be further from the truth.

What we are doing is looking at the actions of the Minister and his appalling judgment in a number of issues to date. For instance, in granting this licence to Gocorp the member for Ipswich has put at risk our international reputation. He has cast a shadow over our international reputation, as the member for Nerang indicated this morning. On the Internet, people around the world are starting to question the processes we put in place in terms of granting licences. Our hard-earned reputation which has been built up over a number of years under successive Labor and coalition Governments is now under a shadow because of the appalling judgment of the member for Ipswich.

What are the grounds? Firstly, the member for Ipswich failed to use the powers available to him under the existing legislation. He did not have to grant that licence. When the public servants came to him and said, "Minister, we recommend that the licence be granted", he did not have to do it. He could have exercised his judgment and made a decision not to give the licence to Gocorp on a range of grounds.

One of those grounds could have been that granting the licence would have given the impression that he was doing favours for his three Labor Party mates. That impression is extremely damaging to a Government's reputation and integrity. It is damaging to have the reputation that someone can weasel away and get a licence for his mates.

What is the other ground? The member for Ipswich granted the applicant first mover status. Instead of asking all the players to come in on an equal footing and to start advancing their applications at the same time—

Mr HAMILL: I rise to a point of order. The claims made by the honourable member are not only false but they are offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr QUINN: I withdraw them if he finds them offensive. First mover status certainly was available to Gocorp. Apart from that, the gaping hole in the Government's presentation here tonight is that, while it seeks to defend the member for Ipswich, it is absolutely undermining him with the legislation that is before the House. The member for Ipswich granted the licence to a company which involved three Labor mates. The Government now seeks to reverse that decision by seeking to ensure that those Labor mates do not benefit from the licence granted to them by the member for Ipswich. The Government cannot have it both ways. Either members opposite support him in the censure motion or they support the legislation. It has to be one or the other. Either the member was right and his decision stands, or he was wrong and remedial action is necessary.

The Labor Party has condemned the member for Ipswich in this House. Those opposite talk about hypocrisy. There could be no more hypocritical stance, no more ironic stance and no worse set of double standards than the Australian Labor Party has displayed in this House tonight.

It is trying to support a member in this censure motion but at the same time it has introduced legislation that fixes up an appalling mess that he left. The Government cannot have it both ways. Either the Treasurer was right or he was wrong. By supporting the Government's amendment to the motion, members are saying that he was right. However, the Government has legislation in the House that says that he was wrong. Which is it? It is one or the other. The Government cannot have it both ways.