



Speech by
**Mr DENVER
BEANLAND**

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY

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MEMBERS' AND RELATED PERSONS' REGISTERS OF INTERESTS

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (4.09 p.m.): Today we are debating the Government's response to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee report No. 2, which was tabled in this House in October 1996. The former National/Liberal coalition Government that the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Borbidge, referred to a few moments ago, some weeks prior to the last State election reported to the House on its recommendations as outlined in that report. Our Government accepted 19 of the 21 recommendations. I mention that because the member for Ashgrove seems to be unaware of these matters as he unfortunately has made some a very ill-advised statements in this place.

As a Government, we accepted 19 of the 21 recommendations. Two of those recommendations have not been accepted by this Government. One relates to a register of ministerial interests, as we already have a members' pecuniary interests register. I can understand why the Premier did not accept that, as we did not accept it. There is no such thing as a secret pecuniary register, whether it is for Ministers or somebody else. The moment that a register is made, people will demand to see it and they will demand that it be made public. There will be FOI applications, judicial reviews and all sorts of things that will make that register public. It is just creating a rod. I believe that in this day and age it is not acceptable to have that sort of situation. If we are going to have registers, they have to be made public. I do not believe that that register would have achieved anything more than the current register achieves, which is open to the public whether the information relates to a Minister or a backbencher. It was proposed that the register stipulate an amount of money. To you, Madam Deputy Speaker, or to me, \$100 is a lot of money. However, to someone like Kerry Packer it is merely petty cash. To him it might be the equivalent of \$1m. To some in this place, \$1,000 may seem a lot of money and \$100 may not seem all that much. We have to appreciate that difference.

The other recommendation that was not accepted by either Governments was that of the Standing Order that was replaced with Standing Order 158, which was taken from the House of Representatives Standing Orders. I notice that the current Government, like the former Government, accepted it rather than the recommendation of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. To be fair, it was a very complex Standing Order that, from time to time, would have placed members of this House in a lot of trouble. Under that order, one needed to know every detail of every debate about which one was participating in a division. That is not always possible for a host of reasons, including the fact that sometimes one may be tied up in committee meetings and so forth when the House is meeting. Other activities such as meetings with Ministers make it impossible to know every detail of every division. I think the new Standing Order resolves the problem. When in Government, we accepted it and it has been accepted by the current Government.

A recommendation that was not accepted by the Government, but which we accepted and which the Premier has commented on, relates to the definition of sponsored travel under clause 7(k) of the motion. It is fair to say that there has been a great deal of grandstanding by the Premier in relation to this particular clause. As the Leader of the Opposition has just said, the Premier's superlatives have ranged from trivial through tough, toughest, the most tough to super tough. Clearly, changes have been made and the Opposition accepts those changes. We have gone from reporting on sponsored

travel, accommodation or meals, sporting or cultural entertainment over \$500 to reporting all sponsored travel or accommodation. That is fairly clear cut and should not involve members in a great deal of bookkeeping requirements. It is fairly easy to keep track of such figures, with the exception of upgraded airline travel and upgraded accommodation, which is being excluded. I am pleased that the Leader of Government Business has exempted those items because, as he so rightly put it, we travel around a fair bit and we would not know what accommodation we have been booked into. If a member's accommodation were upgraded, he or she simply would not know. Members could have been caught out. It is important that, in moving these types of amendments, we make every effort to abide by the requirements of the Parliament. We do not want to trap members and, realistically, any one of us could have been placed unintentionally in such a situation. It is fairly clear that keeping track of sponsored travel or sponsored accommodation should not be too onerous a task.

Changes have been made in relation to the requirements relating to meals, and sporting or cultural entertainment. Many members go to various types of entertainments. One example that springs to mind involves members attending performances at the cultural centre. Who knows what the cost of those activities are? Who knows what the entrance fee to such functions is? I have no idea of the price of tickets that I receive from time to time. If a very low limit is placed on such activities, members may unintentionally breach the requirements. We have to be clear and concise about this. I know that the former Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee set a limit of \$500 to try to ensure that members were not trapped in that way. However, that results in onerous bookkeeping requirements. Of course, those requirements do not just relate to one specific function; they also apply to any related functions. One might attend a function today and in six months' time one might go to another function involving a related company, but one may be unaware of that relationship. One is often invited to different functions by different companies. There is a close relationship between many companies. Of course, under this motion members would have to report on all attendances. That needs to be picked up and we need to keep it in mind.

For all that has been said by the Premier, it has taken almost 12 months to get this motion into the Chamber. All the hard work had been done by former Premier Borbidge and his Cabinet. We sat up late working on the motion. I suggest that the Premier ought to burn a little of the midnight oil and do a little of the hard work, as the former Government had to do in relation to this matter. All that the Premier had to do was pick up the report that was tabled, and that took him 12 months. It shows that the Government has been a bit slack. I read in the paper today that "truancy" is the in word and there has been a little truancy in relation to this matter.

I have covered most of the issues that I wanted to raise. It is fair to say that the proposed arrangements tidy up the current arrangements and add greater transparency and accountability. All members ought to be able to adhere to these requirements without getting themselves into difficulties and without having to keep onerous details and records, whilst at the same time being up-front about their arrangements, whether they be travel or some other type of arrangement or gift that they receive. That is why the former Government put forward the proposals and it is why we on this side of the House support them. As for the toughest, the super toughest and the trivial, I suggest that the Premier is reacting to his friends at the Courier-Mail or Sunday Mail in relation to these items.
