



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH

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PUBLIC SECTOR ETHICS AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—ONP) (9.41 p.m.): I rise to support any Bill that endeavours to bring some integrity to the position of politicians and the Public Service. The member for Surfers Paradise said that those who hold the occupation of a member of Parliament are second only to a car salesman in the least trusted stakes. I believe that the statistics he quoted were from a newspaper. Well, I hate to have to contradict anything that other members of this House say, but west of the ranges car salesmen are actually held in a lot higher esteem than are members of this House. The level of distrust is such that there is a saying that goes similar to this: if a politician asks you to do something, do the opposite.

The referendum was a prime example of the result of that saying. There are many people who now question the integrity of members of this House because of their endorsement of the republican referendum after having sworn an oath of allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen. I was asked several times during the week preceding the referendum the following question: "If members took so lightly the oath of allegiance they swore in Parliament, if they did not believe in the words they spoke, how can we the people believe anything they say in the future?"

I, for one, did not swear the oath of allegiance to our constitutional monarchy lightly, and I reaffirm that oath here tonight. Perhaps other members should settle the question in the minds of the people in their electorates. The referendum was one the people wanted the politicians to stay out of, and it was one that we should have stayed out of. Every day we have a chance to set the example and be statesmen or stateswomen. Every day we let that opportunity go by. How many times have schools from all of our electorates visited Parliament and we have later heard of the disgust of the teachers and students?

All the Bills in the world to address the issues of ethics and conduct will do little to rectify the cynicism of the general public if the behaviour splashed across the media goes unaltered. Where I come from, a lie is a lie. It may very well be misleading, it may very well be an untruth or any other name that members want to give it; but no matter how one terms it, a lie is a lie, and the people judge it as such.

I hope that the Community Cabinet meeting and the responses to the people's concerns prove that this Government has integrity and does not just mouth platitudes. Let us hope that it does not push the people's opinion of politicians even lower. The people do not want false hope, they do not want empty platitudes, they only want the truth so that they can get on with their lives. They want politicians whom they can respect and trust. They may not like it, they may not agree with it, but they will at least respect the truth. They want politicians who are prepared to fight for them—to fight for the area they live in and the country we love. They do not want politicians putting foreign interests before theirs. They want to know if we put their interests far above those of a party.

The reason why both the coalition and Labor lost seats in the last State election is that there is so little respect for party politicians. That is why One Nation members are here in this corner of the Chamber—not because the people liked us any better but because they had lost faith in the people who were here. If this Bill can start to bring back to the people confidence in those who lead us into the new century and that confidence can be proven to be justified, maybe we can go forward with the blessing of the people, and then their belief that "if a politician wants it, it cannot be good for us" will remain here in this century as we go into the next.