



Speech by

Mr LEN STEPHAN

MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

Hansard 22 July 1999

AUSTRALIA ACTS (REQUEST) BILL

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie—NPA) (12.14 p.m.): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to take part in this debate. From what I have been hearing, it seems that some members are asking, "If it is not broken, why try to fix it?" I really believe that that is what—

Mr Beattie: You are a better person as a result.

Mr STEPHAN: Yes.

The member for Burdekin referred earlier to his German forebears and how they were castigated by the Lutherans. My forebears were part of the Lutheran establishment. They were very hard working but they, too, had difficulty living in that country. That is why they came here to a new land, to a new beginning. They worked very, very hard and successfully in the 150-odd years that they have been here. They have made contributions to the good of the country in which they live. Most of them are still working on the land. Many of them can be very proud of having moved to Gympie and made a living on the land in dairying or in fruit and vegetables.

Mr Beattie: I'm worried about those dairy farmers. That is why National Competition Policy was rolled back—to protect those dairy farmers.

Mr STEPHAN: Sometimes things do not work out the way that they were designed to. In such circumstances, we have to look forward and not back. If one wants to look back, one finds that problems arose in many areas, whether it was to do with National Competition Policy or something else. If things look good for the future there is no real purpose in looking back.

Mr Palaszczuk: Are you supporting Dick Schroeder in Gympie?

Mr STEPHAN: Ted Schroeder? He is certainly making a name for himself and at the moment is working out what he will do. However, I am not too sure if he will have enough support to be able to remain in this place for 10 or 20 years. That is something that will also have to be looked at.

Mr Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! I am trying to listen to the member for Gympie.

Mr STEPHAN: We also cannot push aside the fact that, as a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, we are part of a very large organisation. All members of the association can learn from one another and support one another. I believe that, if we are going to throw that sort of background away, we are not going to be very successful at all. Anyone who has taken part in a CPA conference will know the camaraderie that exists and how much members rely on and learn from one another.

I caution the Government to take things fairly slowly, to make sure that it has thought through what it has in mind to do. Listening to the comments that Government members have made, I do not think that they have done that. I do acknowledge that it has not been given an easy decision to make. My first thought is that the Government needs to know precisely where it is going. It has to think everything out before it reaches the stage of making the final decision, but I do not think that it has done that. I reiterate what I said when I began my speech: if it is not broken, why try to fix it?