



Speech by

LINDY NELSON-CARR

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

Hansard 28 April 1999

PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERS (OFFICE OF PROFIT) AMENDMENT BILL

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (12.34 p.m.): As honourable members would know and appreciate, this Bill intends to clarify the law so that MLAs may serve the community on Government bodies providing that they receive only reasonable expenses. Its aim is to remove the cumbersome process that currently must be followed before an MLA is permitted to perform these duties. The existing requirements may be discouraging MLAs from serving their community to the best of their ability.

I refer to one particular case, which dates back to 1990 and concerns the member for Everton, who conducted swimming and safety lectures at the South Brisbane College of TAFE. The member asked that payments be reserved. However, a cheque for \$21.60 was subsequently forwarded to him. The member returned the cheque and held discussions with the college. Later, he received a further cheque for another \$21.60. As a result, the member instigated a very time-consuming process. That is what this is all about today—trying to prevent such time-consuming processes. The member for Everton had to seek legal advice.

Mr Lucas: I bet that didn't cost \$21.60.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I bet that it did not cost \$21.60, either. He approached the then Premier and told him that he had received the cheque. The then Premier moved a motion in this House to the effect that the member should remain a member of the Legislative Assembly. The motion was passed. This whole process occurred because of the efforts of the member for Everton in conducting two swimming and water safety lectures—all this trouble simply for serving the community.

Mr Lucas: It just shows: you look before you leap.

Ms NELSON-CARR: That is right. You definitely look before you leap. This surely highlights the problems that exist currently and we need to resolve them. I wonder how many members have been discouraged or would be discouraged from serving their community if that is the type of outcome that they could expect. Why should not the community expect to receive the best efforts of its elected members? Why should not the community expect that their elected members would want to give its skills and energy and time? Why would not we expect that members would want to serve the community, using their expertise and credibility, without having to jump these sorts of hurdles, which are time wasting and absolutely unnecessary?

Mr Mickel: Disgraceful!

Ms NELSON-CARR: Absolutely. As we have heard, these are very significant hurdles.

The ability for members to serve the State should not be restricted unnecessarily by the ambiguities of the law. As the law stands currently, there are serious restrictions imposed on all members who wish to contribute by accepting positions on statutory boards, committees, councils or other Government bodies. That is because there is an attendant risk that their appointments or elections will become null and void. In supporting this Bill, all members will be better placed to serve the people of Queensland without the unnecessary complications.
