



Speech by

**Mrs E. CUNNINGHAM**

**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

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Hansard 25 May 1999

**MEMBERS' AND RELATED PERSONS' REGISTERS OF INTERESTS**

**Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—IND) (4.18 p.m.): I move the following amendments circulated in my name—

- "(a) That in the definition of 'sponsored travel' the words 'meals or sporting or cultural entertainment' be deleted; and
- (b) In section 7 'Disclosure of Interests' section (j) after the word 'gifts' the words 'hospitality, meals, sporting or cultural entertainment' be added and also the sum of '\$500' be deleted and the sum of '\$100' be inserted."

The amendments deal with two specific matters. Those matters are perhaps the ones that, in terms of a member's work, the community finds the most difficult to get a clear understanding of. They also find it the most unpalatable when they believe that members are abusing the position that we hold.

The first amendment deals with the definition of "sponsored travel". The Leader of Government Business has excluded from the definition meals, sporting or cultural entertainment. The first time that this matter was raised by the member, there was a reaction from the media in particular, because the motion was put through with a great deal of haste and not a great deal of comment. That particular element was targeted as presenting an opportunity for the Parliament to pass a motion with haste to allow indiscriminate attendance at the Olympic Games in particular without a necessity or an obligation to report.

Irrespective of what provoked the revisiting of this issue, I think the Leader of the House for giving us the opportunity to adopt a more considered approach. I think the community will accept the outcome as being one that was well considered rather than as something that was decided hurriedly and without a clear explanation being given by the mover of the motion of the reasons for the amendment.

My second amendment relates directly to the disclosure of hospitality, meals and sporting or cultural entertainment. In letters to the editor and in editorials in the Courier-Mail in April and March, quite a bit of angst was expressed not only by a member of the community but also by the writer of the Courier-Mail's editorial about the fact that it appeared that the Parliament was endeavouring to get around obligations to disclose hospitality, meals, and sporting or cultural entertainment above a reasonable value. I am sure that the mover of the motion, the Leader of the House, will respond to the issues that I have raised.

In respect of hospitality, meals, and sporting or cultural entertainment, the proposed amendment to subsection 7(j) reintroduces an obligation to declare such entertainment. The amendment also proposes to reduce the ceiling from \$500 to \$100. Most people in the community would feel that a meal or entry to a sporting event worth in excess of \$100 is significant. Most individuals would not go to a function and spend \$100 per person on a meal. They would view access to a sporting event in the same light. If the entertainment or meal is worth over \$100, it perhaps should not be on the front page of the Courier-Mail. However, there should be an obligation on members to declare such gifts.

I value some of the comments made both privately and publicly by the Leader of the House. Some weeks ago, when the motion to dramatically change our reporting obligations was moved, it was highlighted that members already had an obligation to report in respect even of such things as a cup of

tea at a CWA meeting. According to the letter of the law, but perhaps not according to the spirit of the law, that was our reporting obligation. I have been here for only four years. I have never declared a cup of tea at a CWA meeting, and I did not even believe that such an obligation existed. I can understand the need to clarify that. In undertaking our normal day-to-day responsibilities, we are often given hospitality. That may only be of a very humble or a minor nature. However, according to the letter of the law that existed at the time, we had an obligation to disclose that and we were not doing so. It certainly needed some attention.

As I said, I am moving these amendments to reflect community concerns that hospitality, meals, and sporting or cultural entertainment in excess of \$100, not in excess of \$500 as is proposed, should be declared. I will be guided by the response of the House.

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