



Speech by

Mr N. ROBERTS

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Hansard 27 April 1999

NATIONAL COMPETITION POLICY

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (10.12 a.m.): The One Nation solution to issues arising out of the implementation of National Competition Policy is to abolish it—a notion with as much sense as moving in this Parliament to abolish poverty, crime, prejudice and war! There is no doubt that National Competition Policy implementation has caused hardship and anxiety in many sections of the community. But is abolishing it an intelligent response or solution? I think not.

Mr Beanland: There is a Bill before the House covering it.

Mr ROBERTS: I am not talking to the Bill.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! He is not talking about the Bill. There is no point of order.

Mr ROBERTS: The record will show that over the past four years I have been a strong critic of the policy and have called for changes to be made, including: the need for the States to be given more autonomy in its implementation; the need to curb the almost unfettered powers of the unelected National Competition Council; the need for a stronger public benefit test which takes more account of the social obligations of Governments and the economic impacts on communities; and the need to challenge the current presumption that competition is good and regulation bad.

However, there are elements of the National Competition Policy which make sense and which should be an activity of any good Government. These include the need to regularly review legislation which restricts competition or grants special privileges to certain sections of the community to ensure that such legislation remains in the public interest. There is nothing sinister in this. It is a function of good government. We certainly should be debating the nature and extent of such reviews. For example, it is ridiculous to apply the same rigorous tests to regulations applying to hairdressers as one would to single-desk selling in the sugar industry.

However, rather than promote a constructive debate about these issues, One Nation's solution is to throw the baby out with the bathwater. The people of Queensland deserve better than that.
