



Speech by

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Hansard 15 April 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Disclosure and Registration of Members' Interests

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth— ALP) (Minister for Communication and Information and Minister for Local Government, Planning, Regional and Rural Communities) (9.42 a.m.), by leave: On 11 March 1999, not in the darkness of night as believed by some but at the start of business that day with a full press gallery present, I moved an amendment to the resolution on the disclosure and registration of members' interests. The motion was agreed to by the House.

The amendment clarified the definition of "sponsored hospitality benefit". Since the House agreed to this motion, there have been two articles in newspapers, namely, the Courier-Mail, on 21 March, and the Sunday Mail, on 11 April. In both articles the Parliament was criticised for not debating this amendment. One article stated—

"Without a word of explanation the Queensland Parliament has changed its own rules on the disclosure of MP's interests."

I point out that, although both of these commentators were critical of having no explanation of the amendment, neither of them took the time to contact me to seek an explanation. In order for them to understand the logic of this amendment, I would point out a number of matters.

Prior to 21 March, ambiguity existed in the interpretation of the resolution dealing with members' interests. In regard to section 7K, one interpretation of this section was that it related to sponsored travel and hospitality, for example, accommodation. Another interpretation was that it may include meals and hospitality not associated with travel. To rectify this ambiguity, an amendment was moved which clarified what members believed the section related to. I note that the critical comments made in relation to our amendments state, firstly, "They also will be able to accept trips to the Olympic Games without having to tell their electors." No, this is not correct, as under the registers members will still be required to declare any travel and/or accommodation. Secondly, former member Clem Campbell stated that what we were doing is "getting around the Phil Coles factor". This is also untrue, as Phil Coles got into trouble for accepting free holidays and gifts and, under the registers, members will still be required to declare travel, accommodation, holidays and gifts.

In conclusion, I find the suggestion that members are trying in some way to cover up or hide something quite ludicrous. As members would know, going to a box at the cricket or football or to lunch at a restaurant uptown is no way of concealing what one is doing. In fact, on most occasions we feel as though we are living in a fish bowl.
