



Speech by

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

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MEMBERS' AND RELATED PERSONS' REGISTERS OF INTERESTS

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth— ALP) (Leader of the House) (4.23 p.m.), in reply: I thank the Opposition for its support for the motion that has been moved. I will deal briefly with the amendments moved by the member for Gladstone. I agree with her that, yes, there was a bit of an outcry when I moved the amendment to the original resolution. It was a beat-up then and it is a beat-up now. The reason it was moved in that way was that I saw it as a very simple amendment which was explicable in itself. Yet a journalist was able to take hold of that and say that we were going to get free trips to Sydney to go to the Olympic Games. If anyone actually read the amended motion, they would know that that was not true and not possible; that any sponsored travel and accommodation would still need to be made public and declared. Yet the *Courier-Mail* ran that story and, yes, there was an outcry. People did not believe the motion that I had moved; they believed the story that was in the newspaper.

My first mistake was that I believed that the journalists would have been smart enough to know what it meant. I guess I made a terrible mistake. Secondly, I thought they would have been decent enough to ring me up and ask me for an explanation. I was wrong also on the second count. That is how we ended up with a story in two newspapers that was wrong, wrong, wrong.

What we are talking about in relation to the amendment moved to the original 1989 resolution, and which is included in the motion that I have moved today, is the exclusion of the requirement for members to have to declare their attendance in respect of every function in relation to which they do not pay for their ticket. The member for Gladstone spoke about costs. One of the things that many of us do not know in relation to the functions to which we are invited is the cost. When we are invited to a function, we do not know what the cost is. If we are invited to the theatre, we do not know what the cost is. If we get invited to a box at the football, the cricket or the tennis, we do not know what the cost of that is. Certainly, to the person who has the box it is much more expensive than a normal ticket. What are we going to do, ask them each and every time, "Will you tell me the cost of this to you so that I'll know whether I have to declare it?"

Every time we open something or other and we are given a gift, I get sick of the jokes that people make—in front of 100, 200 or 300 people—that whatever we are being given is not in a brown paper bag and is not worth much. Everyone who makes such a remark thinks that they are making their own joke; every time we go to a different function, the same joke is told. Be that as it may, that is something we accept as a part of politics. We do not know the cost, and I do not propose that we should have to find out.

From 1989 or 1990 members of Parliament did not declare free tickets to functions and sporting or cultural events. Yet all of a sudden someone put an interpretation on it that perhaps that is what it meant. I moved that motion to clarify that situation so that people would not be saying that. I think it is reasonable. In respect of all of the functions I have attended, I have never felt indebted to anybody. That is what we are talking about with a statement of interests—whether somebody has built up a situation whereby they owe somebody something such that, when they are making a decision, they have a debt or could be perceived to have a debt to somebody. I do not think that we are in any way compromised by accepting a ticket to go to an industry ball or a luncheon. I attend luncheons all the time to speak about Government policies. When I was a shadow Minister in the Opposition I did the same thing. Should I have to go up to the boardroom of one of our major companies and ask them, "Will you tell me how much this luncheon costs today and what my portion of it would be so that I can

work out whether I have to fill out a form?" I think it would be silly to do that, and we should not have to do it.

The next issue is the issue of \$500 and \$100. \$500 is the figure for gifts and it has been there right throughout the nineties. Right throughout the nineties there has been a separate ministerial requirement that gifts of \$100 and more are not accepted. The difference is that anyone other than a Minister can actually accept a gift over \$100. If it is over \$500, or a combination of gifts over \$500 in a year from one source, they have to declare it. For Ministers it is different. If they receive a gift that is worth \$100 or more, they have to give it to the State or pay what it is worth. Then they can buy it back from the State at the wholesale price that is put on it by the Ministerial Services Branch. I will give members an example of how that branch values things.

I had a gift given to me one day, and I will not say what it was because I would not want to embarrass anyone. I was given this gift. It was a piece of art; I will say that much. I sent it over to have it valued. It was valued at \$190. It came back and if I wanted to buy it, I could pay \$90, which was the difference, and I could keep it. I thought, "I really do not want to do that. I am not that impressed with it. We can keep it in the office. I will hang it up in the office." I hung it up in the office and every day I walked past I thought, "I wonder who would pay \$190 for that. I would really like to meet the person who would pay \$190 for that."

In the end I said to one of my staff, "Look, the artist's name is on that. Ring up the artist and say you are really impressed with this piece of art that you had seen in a Minister's office and ask how much it was worth." The answer came back that it was \$65. So I sent it back over to have it revalued. Do honourable members know what they came back with? \$95! Not \$65, which was what was actually paid for it, because they did not want to admit that they were wrong. That is the situation we are put in.

Ministers are in a different position. It is the Ministers who are making the decisions every week in Cabinet. It is the Ministers who are making the Government policy decisions and the decisions on where Government money is spent in terms of contracts. That is why there is a higher barrier for Ministers than there is for other members of Parliament. I do not see anything wrong with that. I think that that is perfectly reasonable. For that reason, the Government will not be supporting the second amendment that has been moved by the member for Gladstone. I hope that she can take in goodwill the reasons that I have given.
