



Speech by

**DESLEY BOYLE**

**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

---

Hansard 16 March 2000

**LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**Report**

**Ms BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (10.24 a.m.): As a member of the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee, I support the motion and commend this report to members of the House, because it raises a very, very serious issue that strikes at the very heart of our democracy in this country. I do not know whether the Federal Government and Federal members are asleep or whether there is some nefarious political agenda, but this action of theirs—the Commonwealth reforms—are not at all reforms. They are, at very best, misguided. They offer us no benefit at all and, if they go ahead and if Queensland does not act, they will succeed in disfranchising voters.

At this time in Queensland the Queensland Electoral Commission has been working hard on increasing the proportion of adult Queenslanders who are registered to vote. We know that we have a significant problem with young adults aged between 18 and 25 not registering to vote. The proportion enrolled to vote is nowhere near as high as it is in other age groups in Queensland. We know, too, that in Queensland we have no significant problems with corruption or illegal practices during voting for elections. So our objective should be to increase the number of voters on the rolls, not to make it harder for people to enrol, which is what these Commonwealth requirements would do.

Queensland really has three choices. We can wave our hands and say, "Woe is us", and do nothing and accept; we can, as we are already doing through the committee, lobby hard for the Commonwealth politicians to wake up to their actions and to turn back, as time is still not lost; or, thirdly, if they insist on going ahead, Queensland could set up a separate roll. This has happened previously in history and honourable members may well be required to take that decision again.

Insofar as the costs are concerned, there are going to be extra costs to all of Australia and certainly Queensland if the Commonwealth reforms go ahead—extra costs in staff, education and agents. The alternative to our setting up our own roll certainly would have costs, too, though the expectation is that the cost differential would not be great with either choice. The bottom line, of course, is that disfranchisement is not to be accepted. All honourable members of this House should take up the issue, examine the report and report to their own constituents. I hope that the media will take up this issue. It is a real and serious threat to democracy in our fair State.

---