



Speech by

Mr P. PURCELL

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

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ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (3.27 p.m.): The richness and diversity of this country is due to the immigration policy of our forefathers. People from other nations have come to our shores for all sorts of reasons. After two world wars we saw the largest number of people come to this country. Some people were sent here in chains to serve jail terms. People ended up in this country for all sorts of reasons. It is the diversity of their cultures that makes this country what it is.

No member of this chamber does not have roots in some other country. I know that to be the case because there are no Aboriginal members of this House. So we all come from somewhere else. As my colleague says, everybody has some wog blood flowing in their veins somewhere. When I was young—

Mr Rose: You still are.

Mr PURCELL: I thank the minister. It is very nice of her to say that. When I was living in country New South Wales, people such as myself were discriminated against because we were Irish Catholic.

Mr Strong: There's nothing wrong with being Irish.

Mr PURCELL: That is dead right, and most people in this House would also have some Irish ancestry. However, when it came to jobs, we were discriminated against because we were Irish Catholic. In those days, the employers of the town were not of the Catholic faith. There used to be a lot of antagonism between Catholics, Protestants, masons and so forth. Thank goodness all of that is behind us. A natural progression has occurred and the country has moved on. We have become more tolerant of one another. One can see what has happened in Ireland where the people have not moved on. People from Northern Ireland and southern Ireland come to this country and they live quite happily together without blowing up one another because of their religious beliefs. I have experienced a small measure of discrimination, and while some doors were closed to me I can assure the House that a lot of doors opened because of my ancestry.

In a little country town like Cowra, the people who were on the bottom of the pile and who did it pretty tough were the Italians and Greeks. I was not born until after the war, but I have been told that the Italians and Greeks did it pretty tough at that time. They used to get their windows kicked in by people who probably had had a little more amber fluid than they should have while having a night on the town. There were a fair few soldiers in Cowra as the Japanese war camp was located there. The local shopkeepers, restaurateurs and so forth happened to be Italians and Greeks. That is all gone now. We do not discriminate against those people any more.

The father of my favourite uncle, Uncle Doug Jackson, was very Italian. Uncle Doug's father was about three foot nothing. He was a very small Italian.

Ms Liddy Clark: That's tall.

Mr PURCELL: I apologise to the member for Clayfield. I did not mean to discriminate against her.

Doug Jackson is only one generation removed from Italy, but one could not get a more Australian person. He is more Australian than the Australians. His sons, my cousins, were called wogs

at school. You wouldn't call them wogs now; they'd beat you to death. They are big blokes like me. Those days are behind us. Some may say, "Bring it into this century", because I am probably showing my age a little.

My sons mixed with El Salvadorians at St Peter and Paul's school in Bulimba. People in El Salvador were oppressed and killed for all sorts of reasons. We took people in as refugees and my children went to school with some of their children. It was great when my kids came home speaking Spanish. They were learning from the El Salvadorians, who are a very gentle people. I thank goodness that a lot of them have settled in and around my patch, because they bring a richness to my electorate.

I have also got to know the Filipino community very well. Members who know people from the Philippines will know that they are a very gentle and loving people. I came to know a number of Filipinos through the building industry. They cop a fair bit of flak on building sites because of the very nature of Australians. One of my best mates, whom I will not name because he will kill me if I do—

Mr Briskey: Go on, name him.

Mr PURCELL: We gave him a nickname that was probably a little discriminatory, but he said, 'By God, I'm Aussie now, because I've got a nickname.' That made him a part of us. It was not meant to be derogatory to his nationality. It was meant to bring him closer to us and make him a part of our country and a part of what we are.

I do not think any concrete would have been laid in this country without the Italian community. They are a very hardworking and honest people. We do not want to see them discriminated against.

I am very disappointed with the stance that the opposition has taken on the bill. I listened to the concerns that the opposition leader raised. He should read Peter Beattie's second reading speech, which I will refer to. The Premier's second-reading speech makes it quite plain what the bill will do and what it will not do. The Premier stated that the bill makes unlawful any public statements that incite hatred towards people because of their nationality or religion, and serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a person on the basis of race or religion. That is quite plain. That is what the legislation is about.

The other thing that the opposition should remember—all 11 of them—is that this is an election promise that was made by the Premier. The Premier is honouring an election promise. If the people of Queensland did not want this, they would not have voted for the government in such large numbers. If opposition members do not want to marginalise themselves any more, they ought to get on with their lives and start letting others get on with theirs.

In his second reading speech, the Premier also stated—

The criminal sanctions will apply only to the new offence of serious racial or religious vilification.

As the Premier said, this bill is not about stopping free speech. It will respect privacy and will only target statements made in public. For example, while racist jokes made in private may be distasteful and harmful to a multicultural society like ours—as Peter Beattie said, the government judges it inappropriate to prescribe private behaviour.

For example, let us take Paddy's nights. Not being able to tell Irish jokes at Paddy's nights would take all the fun out of the night. The bill does not do that. I have seen the opposition leader at Paddy's nights, listening to the Catholic Archbishop, Archbishop Bathurst, tell Irish jokes. I have heard other bishops tell Irish jokes. Justice Spender tells Irish jokes. They are told in fun and they are not intended to vilify anybody. This bill is not about stopping the telling of jokes in private or at private functions.

There will be exceptions under the bill. Obviously, members opposite do not understand what this bill is about. If the matter concerned involves the publication of a fair report, there will be no prosecution, just as there will not be in respect of publications that attract absolute privilege in defamation law, that is, matters covered by parliamentary privilege and the privilege attached to courts and inquiries. It will also not apply to acts done reasonably and in good faith. That covers a fair bit of territory. Sometimes I think we should be closing that loophole, but we are not doing so. People can say they are acting in good faith when in reality they are not, as we very well know. But there is also an exception where acts are done reasonably, and in good faith, for academic, artistic, scientific, research or other purposes in the public interest, specifically including public discussion and debate. I do not think this bill will cause the problems that the opposition perceives it will.

However, none of these exclusions will apply to a criminal offence or serious racial or religious vilification, because the criminal provision requires that the incitement be done knowingly and recklessly. If someone sets out to cause a problem, they will wear the consequences.

I turn to the rise of Hansonism, which started when the Liberal Party disendorsed that person from Ipswich who went on to make statements about race and Asian people and sought to gain political mileage by attacking people coming to this country as refugees. Kids at a school in my electorate were bashed because they were Asian. That was not pretty. We are talking about little kids

who could barely lift a schoolbag full of books. Because they were Asian or looked Asian, they were getting bashed up by other kids. They were probably egged on by their parents. I do not blame the kids who bashed them, because children are a reflection of their parents. God help us if their parents ever get to have a say in anything. She played on people's fears and these were relayed to people's children, and they reacted to that.

A mate of mine, the member for Mackay, handed me a piece of paper which states—

Pat—Old Testament verse from the prophet Micah: 'Yahweh said, "All I want from you is to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly in the eyes of your God." '

I have not had anyone from the churches I attend or others coming to me raising concerns about this bill. I am sure anybody who is concerned about it would not have the mail right, would not have read the bill and definitely would not have read the Premier's second reading speech.

Mr Wilson: Or read other rubbish that has been put out.

Mr PURCELL: Those things are probably published by people who may want to make some mischief. They would not have read the text of the bill we are trying to pass today. I thank the member for Mackay for that quote, because I think it is apt.

The second part of this bill—and I do not think anybody from the opposition spoke about this—will correct an abnormality in relation to work-related discrimination. Where a person works for an employer and does not work directly for that employer but undertakes subcontract work, they can be discriminated against by the principal contractor or the principal employer, not through their direct employer who is the subcontractor. It is good to close that loophole. Anybody who would not want that closed would not want to look after workers. The workers that usually get discriminated against are those on the bottom rung. Not too many people on \$100,000, \$80,000, \$70,000 or \$60,000-plus get discriminated against, because they are usually able to look after themselves. I am not saying everybody can, but most of them do. This probably is of most concern to people on the bottom rung of the ladder who are poorly paid and who probably work on a casual basis for a subcontractor to some grub employer who imposes discriminatory conditions of employment and makes the subcontractor adhere to them. That is the sort of thing we want to stop, and rightly so. I commend the bill to the House.
