



Speech by

ANDREW McNAMARA

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

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PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Mr cNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (11.43 a.m.) I am pleased to support the Private Employment Agencies and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2001. A number of speakers on this bill have tabled their credentials with regard to their personal histories. I note that the member for Clayfield is a former actor and member of the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance. The member for Greenslopes informed the House that he was a member of the Musicians Union. The member for Glass House worked for a modelling company in an administrative capacity. My friend the member for Bulimba has referred to my past as a lawyer which, while it might qualify me for membership of the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, is not perhaps quite good enough. So I table for the benefit of honourable members a photograph of an advertisement from the *Telegraph* newspaper of 14 November 1967 in which a young Andrew McNamara appeared as a model. I think I am the first speaker in this debate to appear as a former model.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mickel): Order! Is the honourable member declaring a conflict of interests?

Mr McNAMARA: I am no longer in receipt of paid employment. The bill provides for the phasing out of the Private Employment Agencies Act over a two-year period, at the end of which licensing requirements and other legislative controls over the operations of private employment agents will be removed, unless the expiry period is extended. It also provides a simplified licensing process to operate during the phasing-out period, taking some of the unnecessary legal process which currently applies out of the way of the parties.

I also note that the bill provides for an Employment Agents Advisory Committee to oversee the expiry period and to formulate a draft code of conduct for the future regulation of agents, which is very welcome. Finally, the bill protects work seekers from being charged inappropriate fees for placement in employment and includes specific measures governing agents in the modelling and entertainment areas.

I was a member of the board of the Wide Bay Group Training Scheme in 1998 when the Commonwealth government relinquished its function of finding work for people seeking employment through the Commonwealth Employment Service in favour of its broader Job Network. The Wide Bay Group Training Scheme was one of many organisations which attempted to fill the hole by providing private employment services. I understand that, as of 13 October 2000, there were 885 licensed private employment agencies in Queensland.

I think it is fair to say that the private employment industry is still evolving and I very much support the recommendation by the independent review conducted into the Private Employment Agencies Act which suggests that self-regulation was not feasible at this stage for the industry. Quite simply, some form of regulation is necessary to ensure that the industry develops in a professional and transparent fashion and, accordingly, the process of repeal over a two-year period under close monitoring is a very sensible transitional approach.

Similarly, the simplification of licensing provisions during the phasing-out period is to be welcomed as it reduces red tape while still putting a proactive oversight system in place.

Mr Strong interjected.

Mr McNAMARA: I take the interjection from the member for Burnett, who I know has an extremely high interest in all matters regarding employment and is very active in his electorate.

The review report also recommended the establishment of a committee to drive the necessary changes and I welcome the committee having representation from employment agent bodies as well as employee groups. The primary role of the committee during the phasing-out period will be to formulate a draft code of conduct for the inquiry, but it will also include advising the licensing officer whether or not to grant or renew licences, recommending any action to be taken by the officer about a complaint against an agent, and where the committee has attempted but not been able to resolve a complaint.

Finally, the bill recognises the need to continue to provide work seekers with protection from unfair fees. But some new and sensible amendments are proposed for the arrangements between agents and models and performers. The amendment bill sets out very clear guidelines for agents to be managers of models and performers, including the requirement for a written agreement providing for at least four management services.

This is good, sensible legislation which helps protect entertainment industry workers in particular from unscrupulous managers and agents. It also provides certainty for the great number of private employment agencies out there in the market. I congratulate the minister, his staff and his department, who have worked to bring in this important legislation and I commend the bill to the House.
