



Speech by

Mr R. QUINN

MEMBER FOR ROBINA

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ELECTORAL[RESIGNATION OF MEMBERS] AMENDMENT BILL

Mr QUINN (Robina—Lib) (9.01 p.m.): In speaking to the Electoral (Resignation of Members) Amendment Bill I would like to acknowledge the sentiment behind the bill. I think it is done with the best of intentions, in terms of reflecting community concerns for the wastage of money for what they see as an unnecessary by-election. However, as other speakers have already said, there are other considerations that have to be taken into account here. We really need to ask ourselves whether or not the people in the electorate would be better served by having a new representative or someone who is forced to stay here against either his own wishes or those of his family and who is merely serving out a period of time—in other words, going through the motions and not giving the job at hand his wholehearted support and passion for the next three years.

Whilst people think of the monetary circumstances involved, it also has to do with the level of service and the way in which people are represented in this chamber. Putting an onerous financial requirement on a representative to try to force that representative not to resign carries with it a range of detrimental effects.

This is not a job or occupation in the normal sense of the word. It is something that only a few people in the community do. As other members have said, it is not a contract at a personal level. It involves family and a whole range of other people who support honourable members. If we are going to put that onerous financial precondition on a person coming into this job, a lot of good candidates may not come into this chamber because people do not know what sort of circumstances their lives will trail into further down the line.

When I was thinking about the bill and looking at the relevant legislation, I was quite fascinated to find that there is actually no requirement on members elected at elections to take their seats in this chamber. If one so desires, one can be a member of parliament in name only and not come into this chamber at all. So, how would it be if we had a person who was elected but, for some reason, decided that he or she did not want to come into this chamber to represent the electorate. We would have an MP in name only who was continuing to be paid but taking no formal part in the process of determining the outcome of legislation, debates in this chamber, serving on committees and whatever else a member of parliament does. We would need only one instance of that happening and the image of parliamentarians, the image of politicians, the image of this chamber and the way democracy is served in this state would be tarnished. I urge members to think about this if they want to go down that track.

From my perspective, I do not believe that I can support this legislation. As I said, it has been presented with the best of intentions, but there are considerations other than financial considerations that have to impact upon whether or not we support this legislation. It has to do with the role of parliamentarians. It has to do with a range of personal circumstances that people can face as their lives evolve. No legislation, however carefully drafted, can take account of all of those circumstances. This is an area which should be left up to the individual member of parliament. He or she has to make that decision. It is not a decision that a member of parliament would take lightly. Everyone in this chamber has worked hard and long and faced a variety of circumstances and challenges to get here. We know what it is like. It is not something we would give away lightly. When a member makes the decision that, for the best reason in the world—whether it be personal circumstances or something else—he no longer

wishes to be a member of this chamber we should respect that decision. We respect the decisions they make when they arrive at this place.

The sentiment of this bill is correct. I understand the community concerns, but there are other considerations apart from financial considerations. We should be very careful not to put these things in legislation because they cannot cover all sets of circumstances. If we do put this in legislation, somewhere down the line someone will be trapped. The moment that person becomes trapped and does something which brings this chamber or parliamentarians into disrepute, we will live to regret it. What we are trying to do is build up the esteem of parliament and the work that we do. We do not want to be trapped by legislation which we put in place purely for financial reasons.

Democracy costs money. If we are going to have the best democracy we should not be afraid to spend a little extra money to make sure that we get it. It is in the best interests of the community as a whole. For that reason, I will not be supporting the legislation.
