



Speech by

**CHRIS CUMMINS**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

---

Hansard 17 April 2002

### **PUBLIC RECORDS BILL**

**Mr CUMMINS** (Kawana—ALP) (4.08 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Public Records Bill. This bill represents our government's recognition of and commitment to sound corporate governance and public accountability in the management of Queensland's public records. Public records are our corporate memory of government and indeed the state. A comprehensive legislative framework for managing public records strengthens accountability for managing them, supports consistent access to them and assists public authorities to meet the changing governance challenges of maintaining them.

The Public Records Bill 2001 provides this framework, and Queenslanders have a right to good public access to public records. The Beattie Labor government delivers exactly that via this legislation. I believe it was General Douglas MacArthur who said, 'There is no security in this life. There is only opportunity.' I seek leave to table some documents I wish to quote from.

Leave granted.

**Mr CUMMINS:** This book, entitled *Chronicles of the O'Dempsey family*, in fact quotes the Queensland Legislative Assembly. J. P. O'Dempsey left Ireland in 1855 to travel to Australia. He began farming in Upper Freestone. The book states—

JP's letter called *How the Land Act is Evaded* was read to the Queensland Legislative Assembly, together with the reply from Mr. Gregory. In his response to the letter Mr. Gregory called JP 'untruthful', 'fabricator' and 'unscrupulous'.

I checked with the member for Southern Downs—some refer to him as the Opposition Leader in waiting—who told me that the *Warwick Argus* changed its name at the turn of the century, but it was the local paper then and the journalist proclaimed JP's veracity. It continues—

The following terms are found in Mr. Gregory's letter in reference of O'Dempsey and his statements, 'untruthfulness', 'fabrication', 'gratuitous falsehood', 'wilful untruth', 'subterfuge', 'unscrupulous', 'unqualified falsehoods'. This is pretty well for one who talks with a sneer about 'the class' to which O'Dempsey belongs. We can state advisedly, that Mr. O'Dempsey's letter bears marks of better cultivation than that of the Commissioner, while it is minus the vulgar abuse that disfigures the production of the other.

It goes on to talk about a letter to the editor, but the point I make is that public documents are very important, whether chasing family history or knowing what happened here in the Legislative Assembly.

We realise that once public documents such as newspapers and other things are read in this House they become part of the record and part of history, which enables people in the future to access those newspapers and other documents. Again, the book goes on to quote from the *Warwick Argus* of 1868 and refers to purchasing the farm in Upper Freestone. It also refers to the Irish clan system and how the O'Dempsey name was an honoured and respected surname, but during the 16th century and under English law the O'Dempseys were proclaimed outlaws, stripped of their property and exiled from their native territory, and it goes on. Public records are a very important part of everyday life. They are an extremely important part of our history and how we can judge the past to make a better future. In concluding I, too, compliment the minister, the department and all the other people who worked to get the bill to the House, and I commend it to the House.

---