



Speech by

**CHRIS CUMMINS**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

---

Hansard 6 August 2002

### **PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr CUMMINS** (Kawana—ALP) (4.54 p.m.): I, too, am pleased to add my comments to the debate on the Parliamentary Service Amendment Bill 2002. At the last state election, the Beattie Labor government gave what proved to be a very popular and well-received commitment to hold parliament once every term in a regional centre to improve access by our community to our parliament.

Democracy works better if people have access to the workings of the parliament, but not all Queenslanders can travel to Parliament House in Brisbane. I have mentioned in this House that as a primary school student of St Joseph's North Ipswich I, along with my fellow students, came here many years ago, inspected, toured and left this place in awe. I believe Vi Jordan was the then member for Ipswich—many years ago.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr CUMMINS:** They did have electric lights and buses.

Honouring the election promise of the Beattie Labor government from 2001 is a very significant event in this state's history. Parliament first sat in Brisbane in May 1860 and, for the first eight years, parliament sat in convict barracks in the centre of Brisbane, near where the Myer Centre is today.

**Mr Rowell:** In the convict barracks; it would have been very suited.

**Mr CUMMINS:** God bless the member—Irish immigrants, not British immigrants.

As I said before I was so rudely and ignorantly interrupted, they first sat in Brisbane in May 1860. For the first eight years, parliament sat in convict barracks in the centre of Brisbane, near where the Myer Centre is today. I believe in 1868 it shifted to its present position in George Street and has met here regularly ever since.

Students from Mountain Creek Primary School visited parliament yesterday and I had the pleasure of taking them through parts of the House. I thank and commend the parliamentary attendants who do a marvellous job of conducting tours. I enjoyed my visit here in either year 4 or year 5. It left a very good impression on me.

**Mr Strong:** They would have enjoyed it, too.

**Mr CUMMINS:** They do a marvellous job of conducting tours. Although students can sometimes get a bit excited and a little carried away, they are provided with a lot of detailed knowledge about our democratic process and why we are here. Sometimes people can lose track of that.

While I was a councillor for the Caloundra City Council I was approached by the Bokarina school to assist with funding for a bus to come down to Parliament House. I had no hesitation, even though in those days the government consisted of members from the conservative side of politics. I still felt it was very beneficial for schoolchildren to attend this House and learn about democracy. I hope it makes them better people as they grow older. I have a complaint about democracy: people complain, yet they do not often participate in democracy as they should.

**Mr Horan:** You won't be participating after the next election, either.

**Mr CUMMINS:** I bet the Leader of the Opposition said that to Peter Wellington when he won the seat of Nicklin, and every other Independent and Labor member who has picked up the National Party's seats. No wonder Joh shakes his head. Does the member remember those good old days? The Leader of the Opposition is leading them nowhere. I pray he stays there as leader.

Queensland is Australia's most decentralised state. While Brisbane is our capital city, our regions are vital to the social, cultural and economic development of the state. Through forums that are very well received, such as community cabinets and regional community forums, in which I regularly participate, the ministers of the government regularly travel to regional centres right across the state.

**Mr McNamara:** People love that, don't they?

**Mr CUMMINS:** They do love that. In fact, my electorate of Kawana—indeed, all of the Sunshine Coast—welcomed the first community cabinet of this term in 2001.

**Mrs Carryn Sullivan:** We would welcome them at Bribie Island.

**Mr CUMMINS:** I take the interjection from the member for Pumicestone, who also sits with me on the regional community forum. Ministers regularly attend those forums and there is a roster system of ministers where our community groups can input and consult with ministers and indeed backbenchers to influence the way that this state is governed.

**Mrs Carryn Sullivan:** Another good Labor initiative.

**Mr CUMMINS:** I will take some of those interjections. The holding of state parliament in north Queensland is ensuring that all Queenslanders feel part of the state's decision-making and democratic processes, which I feel is very well warranted. Townsville is an ideal central northern location approximately four hours drive from Cairns in the north and the same to Mackay in the south and Hughenden to the west. It also has the infrastructure to support the logistics of holding sittings of parliament.

**Mr Rowell** interjected.

**Mr CUMMINS:** Thank you very much. The member will not take me out on his boat.

**Mr Rowell:** I haven't got a boat.

**Mr CUMMINS:** That is right; he is a poor member of parliament. Townsville holds a special place in my family history. Over 42 years ago my father transferred from the North Ipswich railway workshops to Townsville in his trade as a fitter and turner. There he met my mother at an AWU dance, and the rest is history.

I encourage all north Queenslanders to come and see how parliament functions and, of course, how democracy works, realising that the public gallery will provide an opportunity for schools in nearby areas to send children to see parliament in action. Local residents and businesspeople will be able to come and see this parliament first-hand something that I believe is very worth while. This unique sitting in north Queensland presents a wonderful opportunity for the residents of the region and all members of this parliament. We will take the opportunity to listen and learn of other issues that may have higher priorities or lower priorities to those people who reside in other areas of Queensland apart from the south-east corner, and I take on board the fact that members opposite rose in support of the bill and raised just this point—and I think it is a very valid point—as did members on the government side.

At present, the Parliamentary Service Act 1988 provides that a parliamentary precinct means all land and improvements within the land reserved for Parliament House at George Street in Brisbane. This amendment is necessary to allow precincts to be established in regional centres other than Parliament House in Brisbane so that the existing powers of the Speaker under the Parliamentary Service Act 1988 can be used in ensuring the lawful maintenance of security and order in locations other than Parliament House at George Street in Brisbane. The Queensland parliament is all about people. Sitting outside of Brisbane is about providing the opportunity to improve the understanding of our system of government. The Beattie Labor government is committed to listening and acting on behalf of all Queenslanders wherever they live. Taking the parliament to the people is what democracy is all about. I believe that the people of regional and rural Queensland will wish to share in our democratic process.

At this point I want to thank the member for Mundingburra for supplying backbenchers and others with a brochure, because it convinced my family to join with me at our cost in making the journey to the great north to the family-oriented destination of Townsville. I must say that when I showed the brochure to my father he commented on the Exchange Hotel, which he speaks highly of. Although it is just down the road from the Mad Cow Nightclub, he had no knowledge of that some 40 years ago, and I have no doubt that it has changed over the years. Tourism is a very important part not only to north Queensland and the Sunshine Coast but indeed all of Queensland. We very much look forward to visiting The Strand. My son at three years old believes the water cannons are probably the greatest thing that God invented. I would warn the Leader of the Opposition that at the Billabong Sanctuary there are many koalas and there will be no security. So just be careful there, Mike.

In closing, Magnetic Island is also a place that I think most members should try to make the effort to get to. I intend to have a couple of days off to explore the island, visit the gun emplacements and snorkel the Great Barrier Reef. This travel north should be well utilised by all members. I will be hoping to look up my mother's family and ensure that their comments are taken on board. All Townsvillians and north Queenslanders should embrace this. I believe that the commitment of the Premier and his cabinet to govern for all Queenslanders should be commended, and so should this bill. I commend the bill to the House.