



Speech by

DESLEY BOYLE

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard 17 April 2002

PUBLIC RECORDS BILL

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (3.37 p.m.): I am pleased, indeed, to follow the honourable member for Bulimba and note that his speech to this parliament today will forever form part of the public record. That means that Pat Purcell the fifth, in 100 or so years—in the year 2102—will be able to search out information about his great, great, great grandfather and discover something of his childhood memories, something about his work history and, of course, about his faith.

I am pleased to support the Public Records Bill 2001. Public records are, as the minister has said, the corporate memory of the government and of the state. They are important in their accessibility and, in particular, in their ease of accessibility; but they are important, too, in their historical value.

In Cairns recently we have had a demonstration of the importance of historical records and that is thanks to a series printed by the *Cairns Post*. Some time ago that newspaper started to print just one page in one edition each week on historical articles from their records of about 100 years ago in Cairns. This had become quite a feature that many of us relied upon for interest each week. More recently, however, the newspapers published a series of separate booklets titled *Moments in Time* that reflect, particularly through the photographic record, the history of Cairns going back 100 to 150 years and reflecting on the social changes and the industrial history of our region.

Importantly, it is not only good to have these records and to have them easily accessible; in printing them, the *Cairns Post* has raised people's awareness of the value of history. In a city like Cairns, where at least a third of the population turns over every five years, many people know little about its history. This has also increased people's pride in Cairns, simply through their knowing more about how it came about, who did what and when, and what the struggles were. It has also contributed to giving us a perspective on the present. Those in positions of leadership in the community have noticed that the more some things change the more they stay the same. Over the past 100 years the conflicts have continued about the water supply, hospital development and services, industries going under and industries that are newly developing. We also rush to read the small articles that might be termed the soap opera of daily living—who is doing what with who, getting married, having babies, dying, leaving town or whatever. The difference this has made in Cairns is significant and I congratulate the *Cairns Post* on that.

This relates to what we are doing today, namely, upgrading our public record standards and ensuring that they are available. I can say with some confidence, though, having been a citizen of Cairns for a great many years and more recently a member of parliament and having served on the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee in the last term of parliament, that the public record is of little significance in the daily lives of most people in Cairns. I can assure the member for Logan that in the suburbs of Cairns as people are watching an episode, say, of *Big Brother* on TV or the latest Rugby League match, they do not pause, turn to each other and discuss Heiner or any other matter to do with public records. Only a small number of our constituents will ever seek our assistance to gain access to the public record. When that small number do so, even for the majority it will be about a matter of no major consequence; rather, just to check a record or to have access to a matter of fact. A tiny proportion of the searches conducted are for serious purposes or done where there is significant conflict. That small number notwithstanding, having that record available in an orderly fashion and ensuring that it is managed properly is the business of this bill. I commend all who have worked to bring this bill to us today and also the minister.