



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

Hansard 16 April 2002

PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (6.31 p.m.): I rise in support of the Private Employment Agencies and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2001. The Private Employment Agencies Act was enacted for two reasons: firstly, to protect employees from being charged fees considered to be inappropriate for simply seeking employment through a licensed employment agency; and, secondly, to determine the suitability of an applicant for a licence to operate as an agent pursuant to the act. This is a fit and proper test that I am somewhat knowledgeable of, being a former registrar of justices of the peace in Queensland.

A comprehensive review of the act and its operations and administration was undertaken by an independent reviewer, and the recommendations have been incorporated in this amendment bill. It was clear from the review that the current application process and renewal processes were overly complex and cost far too much for industry and government. This amending bill will ensure that the red tape will be cut.

In other words, the processing of applications and renewals took a long time, were tied up in red tape and involved a lot of rigmarole for government and industry. I am sure that most members of the community would rather have more police officers on the beat than researching police records and locating and interviewing applicants pursuant to the current act. I am sure that most community members want their criminal and civil actions expedited through the courts, rather than being delayed due to the referral of applications to the Magistrates Courts.

Registry office staff of Magistrates Courts will no doubt be pleased, because it decreases their workload. These officers, I might add, do a great job for Queensland and are often the unsung heroes of the Justice Department. The new Employment Agents Advisory Committee will improve the present system. The committee will also formulate a code of conduct after the expiry of the current legislation.

I know first-hand of the difficulties and frustration of the processing of applications, particularly where a fit and proper test is applied. As registrar of justices of the peace I was responsible for the processing of tens of thousands of such applications, and it is time consuming and frustrating for the applicant and the public servants involved. In government, wherever we can streamline the process and cut red tape, such as in this amendment bill, we should do so. I commend the bill to the House.
