



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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PARLIAMENT OF QUEENSLAND AMENDMENT BILL

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (2.58 p.m.): It is very pleasing to be able to rise to speak in support of this bill. It is pleasing to hear that all members of this House will support this bill. This is an important first step. As many of us would know, the Internet is here with us. Our children have been using the Internet for many, many years and many of us in this place are slowly learning its intricacies ourselves.

The broadcasting of parliamentary debates via the Internet is an important thing. As the honourable member for Caloundra said, it can be dangerous and that is why all honourable members must be very careful in what they say in this place. We cannot—and I dare say will not—allow our voices to not be heard. That is a very important part of the parliamentary democracy that we have inherited from Great Britain. However, the Internet allows a greater cross-section of the community, especially our young people, to sit up at nights listening to our speeches on the Internet, I am certain.

Mrs Lavarch: We can be heard all over the world.

Mr BRISKEY: In fact, all over the world.

Mrs Lavarch: Do you think the people will enjoy the insightful questions of the Leader of the Opposition at question time?

Mr BRISKEY: I am sure that, after the progress of this bill, people of all nations will be able to sit at their computers and listen intently to the questions from the opposition.

Mrs Lavarch: Do you think the witty interjections of the Minister for Housing will be known world wide?

Mr BRISKEY: I am fearful that they will be.

Mr Johnson: I think the Minister for Housing might be curtailed.

Mr BRISKEY: I do not think that anyone could curtail the Minister for Housing.

Mr English: And nor will they want to.

Mr BRISKEY: We look forward to enlightening the people of the world with the entertaining interjections from the Minister for Housing.

The objective of this bill is to provide absolute protection within Queensland to all authorised broadcasters of parliamentary proceedings on the Internet from criminal or civil liability. The Queensland government has committed to broadcasting parliamentary proceedings on the Internet as one of the government's e-democracy initiatives. The initiative will feature a live audio broadcast of parliamentary sittings with text captioning to identify speakers and the stage of proceedings where possible.

Mr Pearce: One good thing about it is if you are listening to it at home and it is boring, the person who thinks it's boring can go to sleep.

Mr BRISKEY: Or, in fact, a person can actually turn the Internet off. So it is not a problem at all.

Ms Keech: They certainly would not turn off the member for Cleveland.

Mr BRISKEY: Of course, never would they turn it off when I am on my feet.

To facilitate the broadcast of parliamentary proceedings, the bill extends the existing protection provided by the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 to the authorised publishers of parliamentary papers to provide absolute protection to all authorised broadcasters of parliamentary proceedings within Queensland. This means that authorised broadcasters such as the Speaker, the Parliamentary Service staff and Internet service providers engaged by the Speaker or the Clerk will not be liable to criminal or civil action in performing their legitimate functions of broadcasting parliamentary proceedings on the Internet.

I want to take a little bit of the time of the House to talk about how this bill contributes to this government's commitment to open and accountable government. Last year, I and all other honourable members of this House had the privilege of being part of the first ever regional sitting of parliament when we took parliament to Townsville and north Queensland. It was the first time in 140 years of this parliament that it had left Brisbane. Quite frankly, in such a decentralised state as ours, it was wrong that it took more than 140 years for this parliament to leave Brisbane. This government, in its commitment to Queenslanders, righted that wrong. The Townsville regional parliament took parliament closer to the people of north Queensland and rightly acknowledged the importance of north Queensland to this state.

Ms Keech: And didn't they love us.

Mr BRISKEY: They did.

Ms Keech: And they loved it.

Mr BRISKEY: They enjoyed the experience and they were very welcoming to all honourable members and staff. As I said, more than 8,000 people visited the three-day parliamentary sittings. On the last night of sittings in Townsville, an Australian record was set with 1,000 people in the public gallery.

Mr English: A great night.

Mr BRISKEY: As the member for Redlands indicated, it was indeed a wonderful night. That sitting meant that many thousands of people, especially schoolchildren, witnessed what was not previously available to them.

This year, through this broadcast initiative, parliament will be taken to every Queensland who has access to the Internet, making state government even more accessible. So once again, this legislation demonstrates the Beattie government's determination to listen to Queenslanders and to bring the democratic process closer to them. The Internet broadcast of parliamentary proceedings will increase the avenues and speed of access to parliament available to Queenslanders.

Mr Schwarten: Did you say nasty things about me?

Mr BRISKEY: I said wonderful things about the minister. People everywhere who surf the Net will be able to listen to live broadcasts of parliament with text captioning to identify speakers and the stage of proceedings, as I said, where possible.

For the people of Australia's most decentralised mainland state, this will provide a convenient alternative to physical attendance at Parliament House. As I have already mentioned, this initiative presents an opportunity to enhance community and government engagement by opening up the state's decision-making process and democratic processes.