



Speech by

**Mrs D. PRATT**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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Hansard 25 March 2003

**PARLIAMENT OF QUEENSLAND AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (3.29 p.m.): I rise to address the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill 2003 and recognise that this bill is a necessary part of government in its attempt to enable proceedings conducted in this chamber and of the government process to be broadcast live and on the Internet. This is another step in ensuring that the procedures of government are accessed and scrutinised by the general public. It will also help people understand how things actually work in here.

I know from personal experience the perception of how members conduct their business, whether it be in question time or during debate on bills. It is believed that members can jump up at any time to respond to any other members. That is far different from the reality. Perhaps this accessibility will assist in overcoming that wrong impression. Being a member of this chamber certainly made me aware of the false perceptions many people have. This measure will enhance accessibility through the Internet, along with the e-petitions which were brought in in 2002. I must admit that I have not kept up with how many e-petitions have come in, but I would certainly like to know.

I know that in my own electorate there are a lot of people who listen to and watch parliament at the federal level and just as many who are very much aware of what goes on or is being put before this House and who will hop on the Internet at any time of the day and night once it is accessible. Although I would not say that this accessing of parliament will wipe away other Internet surfing in a big way, it will give people the opportunity to check a bill's progress if it is of particular interest to them and if it is one that polarises a whole community.

Broadcasting on the Internet will allow constituents to see if their member is working in their community's best interests. Most members are very well aware that behaviour in this House is being criticised extensively, and perhaps if members are mindful of being under constant surveillance then they will at least take control of their own behaviour. I, along with the member for Gympie, have experienced extreme frustration in this House in trying to get a minister to give a sensible answer, and at times tempers do flare and language far stronger than that which passed the member for Gympie's lips has been expressed in this House, although not recorded.

Unfortunately perhaps for the ministers their evasiveness and bad humour will be recorded for their constituency, as will the contempt they hold for the wider community on whose behalf the questions are asked or the statements made. All members in this House should ensure that they address the issues and not attack other members merely because they do not agree on the issue. It is one of our treasured freedoms and one that our fathers fought and died for, not only that we can have an opposing opinion but also that we can be allowed to express it.

The reality is that the 30-second grab which is broadcast on the news at night does not reflect the reality which is parliament, but it is the smart condescending comments and bad behaviour which always grabs the prime time and gives the public that incredibly bad impression of MPs. Unfortunately, it is one that our schoolchildren take home regularly with them after a visit here, especially if they are here at question time. I for one appreciate that this step of broadcasting via the Internet has its considerations for what is vocalised in this chamber and would hope that it does not in fact gag certain members from asking important questions or bringing forward other information.

I have witnessed unintended references being uttered in the House, especially where a matter is before the courts or a particular person's identity has been protected over a period of time, but again

it has been revealed unintentionally and Hansard has been able to redress that matter before public access was available. So I do have concerns on that particular score.

As I have said, I do have some minor concerns, but I also recognise the extreme importance of giving the general populace access to the workings of the parliamentary process. I thank the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee for the briefings which I hope to attend today. Hopefully I will at least do my best to not inadvertently abuse my position on the Internet stage. Unlike the member for Kurwongbah, I have had no fascination for the limelight or the stage. Pretending to be someone other than myself has never appealed to me, though I can perhaps remember as a child pretending to be a ballerina or something like that. I support this bill. I hope it brings new behavioural standards to this parliament and a greater understanding by the general public of the parliamentary process.