



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Hansard 20 August 2003

PRE-ELECTION BUDGET HONESTY BILL

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (8.53 p.m.): I rise to support the Pre-Election Budget Honesty Bill 2003. I believe that this private member's bill, put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, is an essential bill that tackles the problems associated with the promises made at election time. How can the opposition in any electorate realistically cost the platform that they are putting forward and know that they can meet their commitments when they cannot discover the true financial position that the state is in? How can the general public know what is the truth?

The general public are too often treated like idiots and are asked to make a decision on what many perceive are hollow promises based on a litany of lies. It is a damning indictment of political history when very few members of the public can say that they trust their politician. Very few believe that politicians are capable of the truth and, sadly, they expect nothing more than lies from them. Too many times we ask the public to go to the polls based on a stack of promises from both sides of government and it is impossible for those making the promises to always know if it is even possible to fund them. They go to the polls hoping that the person who wins does not immediately renege on promises made due to the figures having been of the rubbery kind. When governments after elections start to divide their promises into core and non-core promises and renege on those promises, members cannot blame anyone for being forever sceptical.

I am surprised that this government did not bring forward such a bill itself after Steve Bracks's Victorian government introduced similar legislation. The Opposition Leader quoted the very words that Mr Bracks uttered in his second reading speech. It would not hurt to hear them again. They were—

No longer can governments or oppositions hide behind the excuse that they cannot be specific on policies because they do not know the financial position of the state at the time of an election.

If Labor governments in other states can see the value in such legislation, why cannot the Beattie government? I recognise the intent of this Pre-Election Budget Honesty Bill and I support it for there is no real reason to oppose it. However, there are real reasons to support it and they are that it gives us all the opportunity to enhance the voters' belief in us, their representatives.

This bill allows for budget transparency and accountability. Both of those qualities are things that the Beattie government is forever telling the general public that it is about. It is the government's real agenda. Now that the government is asked to put into action the very thing that will put meaning and power behind their words, they begin to quake. The question is: why? Other states have done it. The feds support it. Why does this open and accountable government not support it? I support and commend the bill before the House.