



Speech by

LEX BELL, MP

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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SELECT COMMITTEE ON PARLIAMENTARY ENTITLEMENTS

Mr BELL (Surfers Paradise—Ind) (6.36 p.m.): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Nicklin and also to compliment him for bringing this matter before the House in the way he has done. As you indicated, Mr Acting Speaker, in your initial advice, it was apposite not to make mention to a certain other bill. By and large, most of the speakers on this side have followed that advice. I think it is very true to say that times have changed since the previous committee brought forward a report in 1998. Certainly, many members of the House—myself included, the member for Maryborough included and a number of Labor members included—were not here in 1998. Some of us assumed that a committee such as is proposed by the member for Nicklin actually existed and was ready to be called back to do its work in preparation for a bill which is going to be debated soon.

I believe that we do need to proceed with goodwill. We do need to proceed with due process and responsibility, terms mentioned by the member for Gladstone and the member for South Brisbane. We need to have respect for each other. It is very sad when it is said in this chamber that there is politicisation of a matter relating to entitlements. I see the motion moved by the member for Nicklin if it were passed and implemented as depoliticising, if there be such a word. An all-party committee would consider in a calm and bilateral and bipartisan situation what the relevant entitlements should be.

It would give a timely report, by 21 August, as in the terms of the motion set forward. That time is quite reasonable. Although most honourable members have great respect for the honourable member for South Brisbane, she really had no substantive reasons for her opposition beyond saying that there was no justification for deferring the other bill referred to in the motion. That is not very convincing.

The position is that we are dealing with a matter that is rather sensitive with the public. We are dealing with a matter that needs to be looked at calmly and which needs a bipartisan approach. In the words of the member for Tablelands, we want something that is transparent. We have an opportunity with the member for Nicklin's motion to do exactly those things. We could have a bipartisan committee that could look very calmly and quietly at the matter. That would take the politics out of the bill that is sought to be deferred by the motion.

If this motion from the member for Nicklin is not carried, we will have a situation where we will be debating a bill in a political way, which would be very unfortunate. None of us wants to direct anything towards a particular member. We need to revisit the process and set out afresh an updated process which in the event might be agreed to by everyone. We want transparency. We want everyone to sign off on the current situation, not a situation as it was in 1998, before many of us were in this House.

How can we object to being better informed? How can we object to having a committee dispassionately and objectively looking at the matters the subject of the motion by the member for Nicklin? If we say that we do not want to be better informed, if we say we want to go back to something that was not properly dealt with in 1998, if we say we want to simply look in isolation at the bill sought to be deferred, we will have a political bunfight that will not do anyone any good. I urge members to follow the wording of the motion by the member for Nicklin and support that motion so that we can depoliticise this and get on with the job in a very objective, friendly and cooperative manner.