



Speech by

Pat Purcell

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (3.12 p.m.): I did not put my name on the list to speak on the Freedom of Information Amendment Bill, but some of the outrageous things said in this House by those on the other side of politics have forced my hand a little bit.

Mr Wilson: It is nothing new.

Mr PURCELL: It is nothing new for them. It is business as usual. I am indebted to the member for Glass House for the bit of research she has done to lead in to what I am about to say with regard to this bill. I will read a statement and ask members to guess who made it. It reads—

The new Queensland Investment Incentives Scheme is now open to Queensland firms. It has a number of key differences from the old scheme. Most importantly, the funding allocation from Treasury for the QIIS is \$12m per annum. That is double the value of incentives provided under the MPIIS, which was the Labor scheme.

Who do members think said that?

Mr Wilson: That would be Rob Borbidge, wouldn't it?

Mr PURCELL: No, it was not Rob Borbidge, but this person was from down the coast—close to Rob Borbidge.

Mr English: Allan Grice.

Mr PURCELL: It was Mr Allan Grice, a previous member for Broadwater. He said this on 18 November 1997, when the coalition was in government.

Mr Livingstone: Which party?

Mr PURCELL: The National Party. The same scheme that operates today was operating then. He was proudly boasting, when the coalition was in government, about a scheme put in by the Goss government to attract and keep businesses in this state. He did not have a problem with the scheme. He spoke about what a great scheme it was and boasted about it.

I will give an example of how this scheme has affected my electorate. A lot of people do not know of the amount of industrial activity I have in my electorate. That is probably because of the residential boom in my area. What is driving the economy on the south side is the residential boom in my electorate. There are enormous industries in my electorate along the river. We have a huge boatbuilding industry that has been there for 100-plus years. I have 35 boatbuilders on the river. There are huge industries that import and export because they are situated on the river.

I will refer to one particular company that I know quite well. The other side of politics talked about competition. This company did not have a lot of competition because it does its business extremely well. It had an incentive scheme put to it by the Victorian government to attract it to Victoria. It was going to give the company free land and build a factory at a very low interest rate, to be paid back over 30 years. It was free money. It was also going to help it gear up to run its business.

The business wanted to stay in Queensland. It is a Queensland company, with Queensland people and from a Queensland family. So it came to the Queensland government and we gave it assistance. That

company now employs 250 extra people a week and sometimes, in the summertime—it is a salad company—well over 600 extra people. The negotiations were not carried out by the government; they were done by public servants—public servants who I can assure honourable members drove a very hard bargain. This company had to spend millions upon millions of dollars to get any assistance at all. It had to hit very high employment targets.

Do members know what it got for that? It got relief from payroll tax over a period of time. So we got extra jobs, kept the company in Queensland and got it geared up to the point that it now supplies the whole east coast of Australia. What did we give it? We gave it relief from payroll tax that it would not have had to pay if the extra jobs were not created. We gave it something we never had! But in three, four or five years time it will have to pay payroll tax on those employees, and those jobs will be here to stay. It is a very good business that is now looked on as a Queensland firm and will stay here. It is going nowhere. The reason the company did not go to Victoria was not to do with our incentives and money. It wanted to stay here, but the better deal was from Victoria. You did not see Kennett and other people in power releasing all of that sort of information.

The reason the scheme was brought into this state was to compete with other states. All through the 1970s and 1980s New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia were notorious for offering deals to have companies set up in their states, and Queensland suffered for it. We had the highest unemployment rate in the country year after year after year, and governments during that era did nothing about it. It is only since the start of the Labor years that we have done something about jobs that is constructive and that we have driven an economy realising that we have to get into manufacturing. Value adding is where the jobs are. If we are going to compete in that area we need to put up incentive schemes that at least match the other states. We did not match them in relation to the company in my electorate—I think the weather and the people helped a lot—but we did do enough to keep it here.

One of the other incentives we provided was to assist it in getting information and training. Those 250 extra employees had to be trained. Part of our plan to assist them was to train the new employees. So we got extra jobs and we got people trained. We created jobs that will be here for some time.

I remember the brown paper bags. I remember jobs that had been won in a supposedly open tender system within this state for public works. The company's sheds would be on the job, they had engaged people and they were about to start and then a brown paper bag would lob onto someone's desk or be given to someone at lunch or whatever. That company would lose the job and have to take their sheds off. We could not find out what the new tender price was. A new company would move in and do the job. It did not happen just now and again; it happened time and time and time again.

The other side of politics does not want to talk about accountability because there are too many bodies buried and too many people know about them—

Mr McNamara: They're in shallow graves.

Mr PURCELL: They are very shallow graves, and they are starting to smell and will continue to smell.

This is a huge step forward because the Premier, as head of the Queensland government, has made a commitment to businesses when we have been doing these deals over the period of time that he has been the Premier. He is now going to make some changes and allow information to come out within eight years. I would imagine that people within the department would talk to those businesses and so forth and let them know. Confidences that are given and taken from businesses cannot be broken. I think this is going an enormous way towards still making the scheme work and driving jobs in this state. I commend the bill to the House.