



Speech by

Jason O'Brien

MEMBER FOR COOK

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CANDIDATES FOR STATE ELECTIONS) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (7.09 pm): I rise to speak against this private member's bill, which was introduced by the member for Warrego. But I thank the member for bringing it before the House and for giving us a chance to once again debate this matter. If the member had not introduced this bill, I would never have realised that I am one of the first councillors who were forced to resign from a council under the provisions of the legislation that this private member's bill seeks to repeal and to subsequently be elected to this parliament. I do not think there are many firsts left. Everest has already been climbed. So it is good to get a first—to be a member of the Labor Party who had to resign under the provisions of the relevant legislation and then to be elected to this parliament.

Obviously, some people have been affected negatively by the legislation. But for me, I did not mind. I knew I had to make a choice as to whether I was going to remain a councillor or become a state parliamentarian. I made that choice. I think people have to do that. They have to choose to either be a councillor or be in this state parliament. They either want to be a councillor or a member of this state parliament, and they have to make that choice. Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition said, 'Local government councillors are not politicians.' I repeat: yesterday he said, 'Local government councillors are not politicians.' This is a new day and I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition still agrees with the statement that he expressed yesterday morning.

I do not think that it is correct. I think that local government councillors are politicians. However, if he agrees that councillors are not politicians, the following question arises: when does a councillor who is intending to run for state parliament become a politician? On staking their intention? On being endorsed by their political party if they have one? On being elected? If local government councillors are not politicians, are they candidates? Do opposition members consider people who are running against them to be politicians or is it just incumbents who are politicians?

It does not take long to point out how ludicrous the opposition's position on this matter is. If the Leader of the Opposition seriously believes that local government councillors are not politicians, it logically follows that they become politicians when their nomination for this parliament is accepted by the Electoral Commission. That is when they formally start campaigning, that is when they cannot dedicate their time to their council duties above their campaign duties and that is when they must resign in the interests of the people, the wards, the divisions, the shires or the cities that they represent.

This provision is not in the interests of those councillors who want to run for higher office. It is clearly not in the interests of the National Party, but it is demonstrably in the interests of the residents and ratepayers of the said council area. We have heard a lot this week about the interests of communities and hypocrisy. Tonight what we hear from those opposite is exactly that: hypocrisy. One cannot be an effective councillor and a serious candidate for state parliament. They know it and we know it. Tonight they are undermining everything they have said this week.

This is about choice. Councillors must be honest with their constituents. They must decide whether they want to be councillors or members of this parliament. In the interests of residents and ratepayers, they must make that choice and decide which they are going to dedicate their energies to. I will be voting against the bill.