



Speech by

**Hon. Jeff Seeney**


**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

Hansard Thursday, 29 November 2012

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## **PARLIAMENT OF QUEENSLAND (REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES) AMENDMENT BILL**

### **Introduction**

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (7.06 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 for a particular purpose. I table the bill and the explanatory notes.

*Tabled paper:* Parliament of Queensland (Registered Political Parties) Amendment Bill 2012 [[1801](#)].

*Tabled paper:* Parliament of Queensland (Registered Political Parties) Amendment Bill 2012, explanatory notes [[1802](#)].

I am pleased to introduce the Parliament of Queensland (Registered Political Parties) Amendment Bill 2012. The bill amends the definition of a registered political party in the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. The act currently provides that a registered political party under the Electoral Act 1992 can be a recognised political party in the parliament in either one of two ways. Firstly, a registered political party is a recognised political party if the party has at least 10 per cent of the total number of members of the Legislative Assembly. This is not being altered by this bill.

The second way that a registered political party can be a recognised political party under the act is if the party has at least three members of the Legislative Assembly and the party has received at least 10 per cent of the primary vote at the most recent general election. This is provided for under section 112(3)(b) of the act. This provision was introduced in 2003 through amendments brought before the parliament by the then Premier, the Hon. Peter Beattie. I well remember the discussion and the debate at the time.

It is generally accepted by those of us who were here in the parliament when these amendments were passed in 2003 that a minimum of three members would have had to have been elected at a general election, even though the wording of the current act is somewhat ambiguous. This bill is to clarify the meaning of the act and to ensure that its reading accords with the generally accepted intent of the amendments introduced by Peter Beattie in 2003. It is important that the act be clarified now to make it clear that it refers to members elected under the party's banner at the last election, rather than those changing party allegiances in an opportunistic way to form a recognised political party.

The scenario that we currently have in this parliament—where we have two members who were elected in March representing Katter's Australian Party and one member who was elected in March representing the Liberal National Party who is now joining to form a three-member party—was not anticipated in the 2003 amendments introduced by Peter Beattie. The three Katter's Australian Party members are now claiming recognised political party status under the act and the receipt of the relevant salary and other benefits afforded to a recognised political party under the act and the *Members' Entitlements Handbook*. I table for the benefit of the House a copy of a letter that the Clerk wrote to Mr Katter, the member for Mount Isa, in response to a request by him for those additional salaries.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 29 November 2012, from the Clerk of Parliament, Mr Neil Laurie, to the member for Mount Isa, Mr Rob Katter MP, regarding the Katter's Australian Party [[1803](#)].


The salaries requested were for the leader of a recognised political party under section 3.13 of the handbook, the whip of a recognised political party under section 3.14 of the handbook and the secretary of a recognised political party under section 3.15 of the handbook. Had these requests been acceded to, every member of the so-called Katter's Australian Party would have received additional benefits because of this opportunistic move. The request from the leader of the party was also for one-third of the opposition funding, and the Clerk has advised that this is a matter for the Premier.

One of the views that I shared with former Premier Beattie when he introduced the original amendments to this act was the benefit of this parliament and all parliaments having a well-funded opposition. Standing here now in government, I am in the same position that Peter Beattie was in when he introduced those amendments. I sat over there when these original amendments were introduced and I was gratified by the fact that the then Premier understood that for a parliament to operate properly there needed to be an efficient opposition. I would say to every one of my members in this government that we will be a better government for having a better opposition. That is the way it works. Whether or not you understand that fully now, given that there is a whole lot of new members in this parliament, it is the way that parliaments work. Parliaments generally work better when the government is able to be tested by a well-funded opposition. There is no way that this government is going to accede to a request from Katter's Australian Party to opportunistically claim a third of the opposition's funding. That is not something that is good for the parliament or good for us as a government.

The government does not believe that any of the claims that have been made by Katter's Australian Party or the member for Condamine are in the spirit of the 2003 amendments. The government believes that if a registered political party is successful in getting enough Queenslanders to elect at least three of their candidates at an election, be it a general election or a by-election, and those people are elected under the party banner and they garner at least 10 per cent of the first preference votes for all candidates, then the party should be entitled to a recognised status and the additional salary and other allowances that accompany that status. If the people of Queensland democratically decide such an outcome at an election, then fair enough. If Katter's Australian Party were to achieve that at an election or a by-election, then they should be recognised as a party within this parliament. However, the government does not agree with an artificial scenario that has not been derived from an election where various members of the Assembly who were elected under different banners may well get together to form a microparty and then claim additional salaries, allowances and a proportion of the opposition budget.

This bill, therefore, amends section 112(3)(b) to provide that the minimum of three members must be party members who were party members at the most recent election at which the members were elected. This is what the government believes was intended by the parliament in 2003. It was certainly my individual recollection, and I think the other members who were here at the time share that recollection. This is what the government believes was intended by the parliament and this bill will now clarify the situation. I commend the bill to the House.

### First Reading

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (7.12 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

### Declared Urgent; Allocation of Time Limit Order

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (7.12 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, under the provisions of the standing order 137, the Parliament of Queensland (Registered Political Parties) Amendment Bill be declared an urgent bill to enable the bill to be passed through all stages at this day's sitting.

Division: Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Resolved in the affirmative under standing order 108.