



Speech by  
**John Grant**

**MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD**

Hansard Wednesday, 1 August 2012

---

**CRIMINAL LAW (FALSE EVIDENCE BEFORE PARLIAMENT)  
AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr GRANT** (Springwood—LNP) (7.36 pm): I rise to speak on the Criminal Law (False Evidence Before Parliament) Amendment Bill 2012. I wholeheartedly support the proposed amendments and I am so proud that it is the Liberal National Party that is going to correct the grievous harm done by a previous Labor government in 2006. It gives me joy to be here today playing my part with the LNP in reversing some of the harm done by a previous Labor government.

What did the former government do that is so completely unconscionable for a state parliament? They removed from the Criminal Code the offence of wilfully giving false evidence to parliament. The centrepiece of this bill is the reintroduction of section 57 into schedule 1 of the Criminal Code, which will again make it a criminal offence to knowingly give false answers or inaccurate information to parliament.

Chapter 8 of the Criminal Code lists offences against the executive and legislative power. Some examples of offences are: interference with the free exercise of the Governor or ministers' duties or authority; demands with menaces upon agencies of government; any attempts to interfere with the free exercise by the Legislative Assembly of its authority; going armed to Parliament House; member of parliament receiving bribes. These are the lists of offences from which wilfully giving evidence to parliament was removed.

However, proposed new section 57 will reinstate the criminal offence of being untruthful to parliament, carrying with it a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment. Unlike the Labor Party, we believe that it is imperative that parliament not be misled or deceived nor be exposed to potential corruption or manipulation by false information regardless of whether it was given by a member of parliament or other individual. Since 2006 until the current time, members of parliament have been able to try to beguile parliament or darken an accurate understanding of the parliament on subjects it is dealing with, creating an intolerable work environment—a culture established by Labor when it removed this offence from the Criminal Code.

I am reminded of a saying that gives a good illustration of the point in hand. It relates to the use of a computer: garbage in, garbage out. If you give a computer corrupted data, there is no way in the world it will spit out the correct answer for you, and it is exactly the same with parliament. Any person who speaks against the reintroduction of this criminal offence in the House should hang their heads in shame. Not only must we ensure this parliament gains a full understanding of reality on matters it is dealing with; we must set this high standard of integrity.

I want members to listen to some of Mr Peter Beattie's speech on that fateful night when they were debating the removal of this criminal offence. He stated—

It does not matter who wants to score cheap political points—whether they are an Independent member or not. The reality is that this provision was never meant to apply to members. Anyone who suggests otherwise is simply dishonest. I am not interested in the dishonesty and the fraud that exists in this place. The reality is that this provision was never meant to apply to members of parliament, and that is a fact.

I find some of those words breathtaking. He continues—

Those two jurisdictions which applied our provision when it was drafted by Griffith, who was a great Premier of this state and a learned jurist, have applied it in such a way that it does not apply to members. That is a fact. It does not matter how those opposite try to interpret it for some silly reason. That is a fact. Anyone who wants to argue otherwise is doing so for some cheap political purpose—either to grandstand in their own electorates or to be party political, and that is the end of it.

...

At the end of the day, we will support this legislation because it is right. It is about time that we got rid of some of these anachronistic provisions that have been around since Adam and Eve were in shorts. It is about time that we had some modernisation. We should do some of that to the standing orders as well. This is about modernising the operations of the Queensland Parliament and, frankly, it is long overdue.

Not many people in my electorate of Springwood spoke to me about this subject, but let me tell you they reacted very strongly when they were lied to. They often quoted the sale of state assets and QR National as strong irritants. The Labor government of 2006 lowered its standards of honest communication, and I note that it took only six years for the Labor government to fall in a spectacular fashion. It did away with the high standard that had served successive governments for 107 years, putting itself on a slippery slope which propelled it from public office. It gives me great joy to commend this new bill to the House.