




Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

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PARLIAMENT OF QUEENSLAND AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (10.49 pm): We are here to debate the Parliament of Queensland and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2012. In part 3 the bill amends the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. The bill at clause 16 omits sections 89 to 91. In section 91 it inserts a formula to determine the size and make up of the parliament's portfolio committees and the formula provides that in the new parliament the seven portfolio committees will comprise eight members: six government and two non-government. That is under the current mix of members in this House. If we have a look at the bill itself at 91(1), this section applies to each portfolio committee during a period when the number of non-government members is less than 15 per cent of the number of members of the Legislative Assembly. That, of course, is the situation as we see it now because it actually makes the statement 'this section applies if there are up to 13 non-government members'.

I make the point that one member of the opposition mentioned tonight words to the effect that under the old regime of 51 government members there was never a suggestion of this. If he bothered to read the formulas that are in the bill he would see that with 51 members on the government side it is clear that there is a three-three situation—in other words, exactly the same as the last parliament with the chairperson of the committee having a deciding vote. In all other circumstances the variation is that under 13 members or up to 13 members we have the eight—six-two—scenario with five members forming a quorum with at least one non-government member and if the votes on a question are equal the question is decided in the negative but may be put again at any time. Therefore the chairperson no longer has the opportunity to have a deciding vote in that situation. So too is it the case in the 15 to 25 per cent area where it is 14 to 22 non-government members. It is the same situation; he does not have the deciding vote. It is only in 91B where there is 25 to 50 per cent of non-government membership, which was the situation in the 53rd Parliament, that there are three and three with a deciding vote to the chairperson. If it became a hung parliament or a minority government it goes back to the situation where there are three members and three members and if the votes are equal then it goes to the negative.

There is balance in the proposals by the government in relation to this legislation. We could discuss this issue of bipartisanship all night, but if one takes the definition of bipartisanship that the opposition wants to foist upon us that would suggest that in the old, old system that I was involved in for 2½ years we would never get anything through those committees because it was always four-three. It was always a situation where the government's side had more members than the opposition side. Yet we were able to come to bipartisan agreement in that parliament for the first 2½ years that I was involved, as we were in the last six months when we had the three-three scenario with a deciding vote, remember, by the chair. We still maintained bipartisanship. The definition of bipartisanship, according to the Oxford Dictionary is 'of or involving the agreement or cooperation of two political parties that usually oppose each other's policies'. It does not mean three and three, it means the agreement of two opposing parties.

Our committee system is about giving the people of Queensland the opportunity to put their views about things to a committee, and in this situation a committee of eight—simply that, a committee of eight.

Once they have put their views that committee of eight, six and two in this particular scenario because of the numbers in the House, will then discuss and make recommendations to the government of the day as to what the government should change based on the information that has been brought to that committee by the people of Queensland. Those eight members on those committees will be hearing from those people the same stories at the same time and have the same opportunities to ask questions. There is no restriction on the number of questions that any member of those committees can ask. If the members of the opposition want to ask three times the questions, they can ask three times the questions of those witnesses. There is no impediment whatsoever in the legislation around these committees that restricts the number of questions that can be asked by any member of the committee.

At the end of the day, the committee then comes back to the parliament. In my experience over the last three years, where there was always a four-three scenario because the committee chair had a deciding vote, we had one occasion when the committee chair had to make a call. That vote was of no real significance in the scheme of things. That was one vote for all of those reports over three years at a time when the government had the numbers on the committee. That is the situation that we will find ourselves in going forward from here.

If a committee member or the opposition members decide that they do not agree with the committee they have the right to put in a dissenting report. Their voice will be heard in this parliament. The argument that has been going on here tonight with the opposition members saying how unfair it is and how unbalanced it is, is completely erroneous. The bottom line in bipartisanship is not about equal numbers, it is about agreeing and that is what this committee system is all about. As a nominee for a committee chair I can assure members that I will be working hard to ensure a fair and balanced hearing for all people who come before the Finance and Administration Committee and then a fair and balanced discussion within the committee to bring logical recommendations for legislative change to this parliament so then the whole of the parliament can make a decision. I commend the bill to the House.