




Speech By
Hon. Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Record of Proceedings, 27 August 2014

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1)

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (8.40 pm): In speaking to the disallowance motion this evening, can I say that, to be lawful, subordinate legislation must be within the scope of the act under which it purports to be made. Section 392 of the Electoral Act 1992 provides that the Governor in Council may make regulations under the act. The Electoral Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2014, which is the amendment regulation made under section 392 of the Electoral Act, is within the scope of the act. The amendment regulation facilitates the implementation of recent reforms of the Electoral Act made by the Electoral Reform Amendment Act 2014. These reforms include introducing a proof of identity requirement in order to vote in a Queensland state election and providing for the payment of policy development payments to registered political parties. The amendment regulation sets out acceptable proof of identity requirements for the purposes of the Electoral Act, provides the amount to be available for policy development payments and makes consequential changes to the Electoral Regulation 2013 to remove the requirements relating to financial disclosure and reporting, which are now dealt with within the Electoral Act itself.

I note the member for Nicklin is seeking to disallow section 4 of the amendment regulation and is particularly concerned with the provision of an amount to be made available for policy development payments, so I will focus on that particular amendment. Part 11 division 5 of the Electoral Act provides for a policy development payment each financial year to be appointed between eligible registered political parties according to their relative electoral support. Section 240 of the Electoral Act provides for the calculation of the amount of the policy development payment to which an eligible registered political party is entitled for a financial year. Section 240(1) provides that the amount to be used in that calculation is to be prescribed under regulation. Doing this by regulation provides the flexibility to set an amount, taking into account the economic climate of the time.

Accordingly, section 4 inserts new section 8 into the Electoral Regulation to provide that the amount to be made available for policy development payment is \$3 million. I note that under the electoral reforms made by this government the amount of public electoral funding, including the \$3 million prescribed by the amendment regulation payable by taxpayers, is a significant reduction on the funding payable under the former Labor government's regime. In fact, I think it was \$24 million. The payments will ensure political parties can continue to engage fully in developing and shaping policy throughout the electoral cycle whilst continuing to effectively represent the community. The amendments made by section 4 of the amendment regulation are consistent with the Electoral Act and within the power. The government opposes the disallowance motion.

If we look at why the Independents are excluded from the policy development payments, I can say that those payments are made to registered political parties in recognition of the costs involved in the important role parties play in setting the policy agenda. Independents who are not members of political parties do not incur these particular costs. The member for Nicklin has raised this

disallowance motion for nothing but political opportunism in his electorate. Because he has nothing else to add to any debate in this House, he uses these opportunities to get a bit of press. He said that this is the first time we can consider this issue. Where was he a month or two ago when we debated the legislation allowing for the payment of policy development payments? It is actually in the legislation. Where was the member for Nicklin? Also, last night in another debate, he said, 'I haven't had an opportunity to talk about the Safe Night Out Strategy,' despite the fact it has been out there for 18 months. Again, he said tonight that he has not had an opportunity and that this is the first opportunity we have considered this. We know that the member for Nicklin just engages in popular politics on a local level. He puts his little press release out, gets a headline and then thinks he has done his job. The people of Nicklin are waking up to the fact of what their local member is about. They are waking up to the fact that their local member is not a real local representative. He is just—

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, quite frankly, I find those comments offensive. They are untrue, and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): The member has asked for the comments to be withdrawn.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. The member for Nicklin is coming to the realisation that his own constituents find him incompetent, lazy, unable to conduct the duties of the House—

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I find those comments offensive and untrue and I ask that they be withdrawn. The minister is repeating offensive comments.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, you have been asked to withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is my assessment that the member for Nicklin is not a true representative—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Attorney-General, I must have missed that, but I did not hear a clear withdrawal.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. It is my assessment, as a member based on the Sunshine Coast and as I see what the member for Nicklin does, or in this case does not do, that he just uses these little political pot shots to get a headline grab. That is what he has been doing for years. So he wants to know why he does not get money.

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I find those comments offensive. They are untrue and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has found the comments offensive and he has asked the Attorney to withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. The member for Nicklin wants to know why the Independents do not get money. I can guarantee to the members of this House that if the member for Nicklin was getting money through policy development payments he would not be objecting to it. He is not objecting to the philosophy of policy development payments; he is objecting because he is not getting the money. That is the issue.

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I find those comments offensive. They are untrue and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Attorney, the member has found your comments to be offensive and has asked for them to be withdrawn.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. Mr Deputy Speaker, this is a House of debate. If the member for Nicklin does not want to engage in debate or does not want other members to have a say, then what are we all here for? If the member for Nicklin is going to rise on a point of order every second—

Mr Wellington: Relevance.

Mr BLEIJIE: Well, okay, let us go through it. The member for Nicklin asked for relevance. I just said that the Independents do not get the policy development payments. It is your disallowance motion about policy development payments, so I think Independents and policy development payments are fairly relevant to the disallowance motion. I take the interjection because, as I said, I think the member for Nicklin and his contributions over the last few years in this House are quite irrelevant actually. So I am being relevant to the fact that you are irrelevant to this House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Attorney-General will speak through the chair.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I find those comments offensive and untrue.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has found the comments offensive and has asked for them to be withdrawn.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can I add that it would help the House if the Attorney-General could stick to the debate on the motion and perhaps tone down the level of offensiveness, as the Attorney has been reminded several times about offensiveness to other members.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Let us deal with the facts. The member for Nicklin was a member of the Liberal Party and I think he was a member of the National Party at some stage as a political party member—not as a member of the House but as a political party member. That is a fact. We know that he was elected as an Independent member. Having been in the Liberal Party and the National Party, he was then elected as an Independent. That is a fact. We know in 1998 he threw his support behind—

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, can I ask you to rule on the issue of relevance? I have had specific advice earlier in relation to relevance. I believe this has no bearing in relation to the regulation which we are debating tonight.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, if I may—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: If the Attorney-General could just take his seat, I will consult. The Attorney-General has the call and I ask the Attorney-General to return to the motion.

Mr BLEIJIE: The motion seeks to disallow section 4 of the regulation, which deals with the amount of the policy development payment to which eligible registered political parties are entitled. I think it is important for the House to understand that the member's objection to this particular debate is because it relates to political parties and he is an Independent member of the House. For historical purposes—and you will see where I am going, Mr Deputy Speaker—I inform the House that the member for Nicklin is a former member of the National Party and the Liberal Party. Then he became an Independent member of parliament but supported the ALP in 1998 to form government. Then when they did not need his support, he returned to being an Independent. Let's not forget that in 2012 the Independent member for Nicklin put his hand up and said to the opposition leader, Annastacia Palaszczuk, 'I'm happy to serve in your shadow cabinet if you want me there.' So he was happy to then get back to—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! Attorney-General, get to the point.

Mr BLEIJIE: My point is that in the *Sunshine Coast Daily* the member for Nicklin actually said that his vote is with Clive. The member for Nicklin is doing everything to say that he is a member of a political party, but he is objecting to the policy development payment. The Katter party members who objected to this actually receive the \$196,000 policy development payment. The Katter party receives \$196,000 under the policy development payment. I heard them objecting to it but I did not hear what they have done with the money. Have they taken the money? Has the Katter party taken the \$196,000? If they have and they are voting for the disallowance motion, maybe they want to donate it to the Labor Party, the LNP or the Independents. That is on the basis that they have accepted the money of which I am not sure. I am advised that the Katter party is entitled to \$196,000. Where is the money? They vote—

Mr Hopper interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I can see the member for Condamine laughing. He is going red because he is voting for a disallowance motion tonight but he has possibly already banked the \$196,000. Where is the money? Are they going to donate it to the Labor Party or to Peter Wellington, the Independent member for Nicklin? I look forward to their explanation as to where the money has gone. If they have it, where are they putting the money and what are they spending it on? If they do not want to develop policy, if they do not want the policy development payment, what are they spending the money on? Who knows?

The fact is that political parties develop policy. Queenslanders want governments that govern. They want governments that protect Queenslanders. They want governments like this government that believe in the four pillars of the Queensland economy: tourism, construction, resources and agriculture. To do that, political parties—and I also include the Labor Party which I note objected to the Electoral Act amendments but on the evening did vote for the clause giving the policy development payment to the Labor Party—like the Labor Party, develop policies. They have systems and they have conventions, just like the LNP have conventions. Policies are developed. They have an administration team around the development of the policies—something which the Independents do not have. They do not have the structure behind the policy development because it is not their intention to form government.

The LNP took a clear policy to the 2012 election that we wanted Queensland to be the safest place to raise a family. We did that by introducing some of the strongest laws in the nation dealing with sex offenders. We did that by introducing the most comprehensive reform dealing with alcohol and drug related violence which I am very happy passed through the parliament last night. Developing

those strong policies takes a strong team and a lot happens behind the scenes. All of our members here have the benefit of their constituents and also the members of the grassroots political party. They all developed a policy and there is a fundamental foundation behind the parties and that, of course, is the administration. This government actually cut administration funding to political parties in our first budget. We saved the taxpayer when we had to introduce some strong measures in the budgets in the first couple of years of government. We introduced those measures. We saved the money. The Labor Party introduced a system between 2009 and 2011 which cost \$24 million. It cost the taxpayers \$24 million in political funding. We have now reintroduced the policy development payment, but we have saved the taxpayers millions of dollars during that time. It is not as expensive a policy as was the case under the Labor Party.

Most Independents, with the exception of the member for Gladstone—and the member for Gladstone is in the chamber. I am not referring to her. I do have a lot of respect for her and those on this side of the House also have a lot of respect for her. I refer to other Independents and minor parties who create chaos. That is the compare and contrast. There are governments with strong plans that make strong decisions and there are Independents who are only in here to create chaos. We see it at the federal level. I will throw out some names for honourable members on this side of the House. Let's look at some names. There is Carl Judge, the member for Yeerongpilly; Alex Douglas, the member for Gaven; Robbie Messenger—do members remember him—there is the Katter party and the Palmer United Party. What do they all have in common? They all have in common Peter Wellington, the Independent member for Nicklin, because he has tossed and turned with all of them. He backs whomever is popular at the time. That is the member for Nicklin—

Mr WELLINGTON: I rise to a point of order. I find those comments offensive. They are untrue and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Attorney-General, you have been asked to withdraw those comments that were unnecessary.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Attorney-General, I ask you to return to the motion yet again.

Mr BLEIJIE: The disallowance motion moved by the member for Nicklin is a political stunt as is always the case—

Mr WELLINGTON: I rise to a point of order. I find those comments offensive. They are untrue and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Attorney-General, the member finds the comments offensive and has asked for them to be withdrawn.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. The member for Nicklin has moved the disallowance motion. It is obvious that he does not want to give others the opportunity to have a genuine debate about—

Mr WELLINGTON: I rise to a point of order. I find those comments offensive. They are untrue and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member has a point of order. He has found the comments offensive and has asked them to be withdrawn. Attorney-General, it would help if you would withdraw the comments.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw, but I also say—

Mr WELLINGTON: I rise to a point of order. That is not an unconditional withdrawal. I ask that the comments be withdrawn

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Nicklin, I am waiting to hear what the Attorney-General is about to say to see whether it is an unconditional withdrawal.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw unconditionally. I believe the member for Nicklin is now abusing the standing orders in this place with his repetition and continual interruption of a member who is speaking. I have withdrawn, but I make the point that I think the member for Nicklin is abusing the standing orders with his repetition, interruptions and pointless points of order.

The government will not be supporting the disallowance motion moved by the member for Nicklin because, as I have said, political parties, whether they be the LNP or the ALP, have structures around the parties. They develop policies and the policy development payments are about ensuring that, whatever side of politics is in government or not in government at the time, genuine policies can be debated and the ideas can be debated in the public domain. Political parties rely on the structures behind the scenes to assist with the policy development and the formulation of those policies. We will be opposing this political stunt of the incompetent member for Nicklin. Hopefully his constituents have lost interest and they vote for the LNP candidate for Nicklin at the next election, who has a strong plan and is part of a strong team.