



Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

Record of Proceedings, 25 February 2016

MOTION

Amendment of Standing Rules and Orders



Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (6.03 pm): I move—

That the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly be amended immediately by inserting the following new standing order 87A—

'87A. Substantially the Same Bill

- (1) A Bill that is substantially the same as any other Bill that has already been introduced and read a first time shall not be introduced.
- (2) If the Speaker is of the opinion that a Bill that contravenes (1) has been introduced and read a first time, the Speaker shall at the earliest opportunity order the discharge of the Bill from the Notice Paper and from any committee to which it has been referred.'

From the outset, let me make it abundantly clear: this motion is not about any bill before the House and it is not about any previous bills discussed in the House. It is solely about improving the fairness and appropriateness of procedures in the House for the future that will bring about better outcomes, a reduction in repetition and sensibility to the necessary delivery of legislation in this House for the overall benefit of Queenslanders.

We have seen examples over the last 10 years from both major parties in this House where an appropriate piece of legislation has been introduced to the House as a private member's bill which has been immediately or subsequently poached, hijacked or recycled by the weight of government numbers in the House to be rebadged as a government bill for the political gain of the government of the day. This activity does this House a great disservice in terms of the poor utilisation of precious House sitting time, reprosecuting an issue which has already been raised as a valuable step forward on behalf of all Queenslanders, and it simply entrenches the publicly held perception that politicians are more interested in themselves and their party organisations than achieving a better outcome for Queenslanders.

Whether it is an Independent member of the House—and I notice we have an Independent member of the House here this evening, the member for Cook, and I am pleased that he has recovered well from his apparent illness—a minor party of the House or a diligent opposition bringing forward a piece of legislation to the House that requires debate, possible amendment or rejection by the House, it makes absolutely no sense that the particular piece of legislation be rebadged as a government bill purely for the base political opportunistic purpose of the government of the day claiming credit for legislation invented, refined and brought forward to the House by a non-government member of the House. That obviously includes the Independents and minor parties as well as the official opposition.

This motion is a golden opportunity for the House to make a positive change to the standing orders of the House to improve the fairness, equity and propriety of the House not only for the 55th

Parliament but for all other parliaments to follow. Future governments shall be bound by this standing order, and goodness knows we in the LNP hope to be the government in the 56th Parliament.

It is obvious that a major benefit of this change to the standing orders succeeding is that the by-product will be a greater effort by individuals in this House of private members' bills that will improve the lifestyles of Queenslanders—and that also includes opportunities for individual members of the government of the day to prosecute their own private member's bill. It will remove the fear of individual members that if they introduce a bill that is good legislation to the House it will be hijacked by the government of the day for their own self-aggrandisement and political pointscoring. I am not going to quote examples of the political gamesmanship in the past, as that serves nobody any benefit for the future and will only serve to entrench bad political habits that could be avoided by the adoption of this motion.

Historically, where private members' bills dealt only with a minor issue, the minor issue was more often than not incorporated into a government bill of greater magnitude and treated as a small part of a larger piece of legislation. More recently, we have seen private members' bills with only minor changes to the original bill that could have easily been accommodated by amendments in the consideration in detail. This is unacceptable plagiarism at its worst. Under the proposed 87A amendment, unless a bill is substantively different from the private member's bill initially introduced into the House, the private member's bill initially introduced into the House would prevail as the legislation for debate. I call on all 89 private members of this House to entrench their right to introduce a private member's bill to the House that will be to the overall benefit of Queenslanders by supporting this motion to introduce standing order 87A.