




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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**ASSOCIATIONS INCORPORATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL**

CO-OPERATIVES NATIONAL LAW BILL

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (12.18 pm): I too rise to make a contribution on the cognate debate on the two bills before us—the Co-operatives National Law Bill 2020 and the Associations Incorporation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. I would like to congratulate my friend the member for Toowoomba South for his contribution today. It was not just a contribution that reflected on the technicalities of the bill. He actually rooted it in community and he made an excellent point in saying *inter alia* that incorporated bodies are a vital part of our communities, particularly in the bush.

All of us in this House are associated with numerous local community groups that do great work in the community and they depend on the incorporated system to run their businesses. That is one of the reasons why we really needed to have more time to debate this bill—because it is so widespread. I am privileged that I have an opportunity to speak and I am sure I will take up the full 10 minutes in doing so. I do not in any way dissent from my side's agreement with the government to sacrifice some time from this cognate debate for other bills which are very important. However, it reflects on the fact that we really need more time for all of these things.

To give an indication of why I say that, I would like to honour some of the incorporated bodies in my electorate of Southern Downs with a mention in this House. They are examples of the sorts of groups in our community that do fantastic work. They are the fabric that our country electorates and society are based on. There is the Macintyre Pet and Animal Rescue service, the Cecil Plains history association, the Millmerran Commerce and Progress Association, the Inglewood gun club of which I am proud to be a patron and the Inglewood Show Society. There are also school P&Cs like the Talwood State School and Bungunya State School P&Cs. These groups do wonderful work in our schools. They raise funds to provide extras at the schools and are an important connection with the communities that love them, all for the betterment and in the interests of the students.

There is the Warwick Pistol Club and the Warwick RSL Memorial Club, and I am honoured to be patron of both of those. There is the Freestone Memorial Hall Association, which is a group that works under incorporated guidelines and does wonderful work in that part of the world. Without the Freestone Memorial Hall there would not be a Freestone. I am sure the good folk of Freestone, which is east of Warwick, would agree with me. There is the Maryvale Progress Association, the Amiens History Association, the Stanthorpe Museum, ArtWorks Granite Belt—and I am proud to be their patron as well—and the Granite Belt Art and Craft Trail. They are running a marvellous art trail in November this year showcasing local art on the Granite Belt. That is a wonderful way to attract tourists and link the community with art and commerce. The Stanthorpe Band is another group of which I am proud to be patron.

As we all know, these sorts of organisations are composed of great people. They put in unpaid effort in order to run events to keep their communities entertained and supported—myriad different avenues of activity. I can be sure in speaking for them about one of the bill's impacts on them which is

the more onerous responsibilities they will face. My honourable friend the shadow Attorney-General and shadow minister for justice made the point that in some cases these responsibilities are more onerous than those faced by the directors of corporations. That just cannot be right. I certainly support my side's foreshadowing that we will be opposing clause 31 of the bill, which relates to the onerous reporting requirements this bill will impose on the mums and dads, brothers and sisters who run the local golf club, the local history group, a support group, a playgroup, a kindy or something like that.

We all know that it is becoming harder and harder to attract volunteers to undertake work to keep these bodies going. I give an example of my experience when I was an Air Force officer and I did a stint at Air Force headquarters in Canberra associated with the Air Force cadets organisation. Along with the Navy cadets and Army cadets, they are a great group that does an enormous amount of good for young people. They give them the opportunity to excel, to challenge their limitations, to make friends and to build their self-esteem, confidence and skills. One of the difficulties they face is that, like the provisions of this bill, the requirements for instructors became more and more onerous. The amount of responsibility and the number of checks and balances which in many cases were desirable and necessary nevertheless made it harder and harder to attract staff—the mums and dads who run these cadet units. As a result, many of those units in places like Southern Downs are struggling to survive.

Taking the parents group which might be associated with a cadet unit as an example, they will be working under these conditions as an incorporated body. This is simply adding to the demands on the good people who give their time for nothing but for the good of their community. It will impact on them. It will impose extra requirements which are not always available in the community for volunteers and thus will make it harder and harder for them to make that contribution. I certainly agree with the shadow Attorney-General in speaking about that. Speaking for the Granite Belt, the Warwick area and the Goondiwindi area in my electorate, I point out that without these associations we would not have a community. So much of what we do is dependent upon the people who do good work in those fields.

I turn now to the implications for mutuals and cooperatives. I acknowledge that the bill is a necessary action in the machinery of government since we need to align ourselves with the Commonwealth and the other states and territories and we need to have a system that is up to date. However, I would say that given that these two bills are so important, including the one referring to mutuals and cooperatives, why was there a complaint from the Law Society yet again that there was not enough time for consultation? Personally, I do not always see eye to eye with what the Queensland Law Society has to say, but I would say that they are very diligent and they have the greatest intention in looking after the public good in the role they perform in providing the committee I serve on, the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, with feedback. Sometimes that feedback has been very astute and incisive, and I hope it has been the impetus for change for the program that governments put forward.

One of the things they have been saying repeatedly through the current president and also Mr Potts, the previous president, is that there has been inadequate opportunity for consultation. I think that is poor. We need to show more respect to them, the other community groups, interested parties and individuals who might wish to contribute to the committee process because that is what it is there for.

There are not as many cooperatives and mutuals in my electorate of Southern Downs as there are incorporated bodies. There is the Heritage Bank, which the shadow Attorney-General referred to, and I know he has an illustrious past serving that great institution. We have those in Southern Downs as well. There is also the Killarney Co-op, which is a marvellous institution. It is doing it tough at the moment but it is keeping its head above water. They run the service station, the supermarket and the rural supply store in Killarney and they are a much beloved and integral part of that community. There are also other commercial cooperatives and mutuals such as Go Vita, which has two stores in my electorate, in Stanthorpe and Warwick. That is run by John Bylicki. That is another service that people appreciate. It is a good business.

All of these examples are dependent upon the work we are doing here, so it really says something about the government's inattention to the implications, particularly in the bush, that these bills will have on the groups we depend on. There was limited time for consultation and we only get two hours to debate these bills in cognate. The submitters have complained again that there has not been enough opportunity for consultation.

We do support the bills apart from our opposition to clause 31 of the incorporated bodies bill. Other than that, I commend the bills to the House.