



Speech by

**Barbara Stone**

**MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD**

Hansard Tuesday, 19 May 2009

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## **PARLIAMENT OF QUEENSLAND AMENDMENT BILL**

**Ms STONE** (Springwood—ALP) (3.50 pm): I rise to speak briefly to the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill as I believe that the areas that I would have covered in my contribution have been covered quite adequately by the government members who have spoken already and I do not intend to go over again the points that they raised. I would like to say that this legislation will reform our parliamentary committee system—something that certainly has not happened in decades.

The fact that we have only one house makes the committee system even more important. Not only is the committee system more important to our parliamentary process but also it particularly needs to be more relevant. Parliamentary committees have the purpose of scrutinising government, scrutinising legislation and scrutinising projects and expenditure. Today, we see in this bill a restructure of the current committee system that will allow the parliament to continue to undertake that scrutiny.

This bill also brings the committee system into a more relevant form to concentrate on the contemporary issues affecting our electorates. If we have a look around the nation at other parliamentary committee systems, we will see some of the issues that those committees are dealing with. I certainly think if we went out there and asked the people in our electorates, they would tell us that they are the sorts of issues that they expect us to be looking at as well.

This bill will see the number of committees rise from eight to nine. The new committees will be the Law, Justice and Safety Committee, the Economic Development Committee, the Environment and Resources Committee and the Social Development Committee. I think that if members asked their constituency they would say that there would be quite a number of policy areas that they believe would affect them and would certainly want committees to look at them.

The important oversight functions of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, the Standing Orders Committee and the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee will remain unchanged under the bill. There is no doubt that today more people want to participate in the democratic process. The committee system can certainly be a vehicle for that to happen. As committees seek public opinions through submissions and public hearings this will be done. The Senate committee system is probably the most well known of the committee systems and I hope that in time our committee system will be just as well known with the same reputation as our federal counterparts for delivering real outcomes.

As parliamentarians we are expected to deal with complex issues. Our constituency expects us to work towards solutions and outcomes that are for the greater good of the community. They want to see their parliament working as one to create legislation to deal with a broad range of issues. They want to see their parliament listening to public opinion and reflecting this opinion in legislation. An active committee system with the ability to have better informed committee members and a better informed community will be able to do just that as it tackles the issues of the day. I heard the member for Moggill say that the committees should not be used for hiding issues. This side of the House is very committed to achieving real outcomes with our committee system.

Over the last eight years I have been a member of the Public Works Committee and for the last few years the chair of that committee. That committee looked at a wide variety of projects at differing stages of construction. We certainly took a bipartisan approach and were able to produce good recommendations. If the former member for Beaudesert, who was the former deputy chair of that committee, was here in the chamber he would be on his feet telling us how the committee system had become stale and needed to be revamped. He told the House this on many occasions. Today he would be standing here very happy to see the restructure of the committee system to better reflect the relevant issues and opinions of the day.

If one looks at other committee systems around the nation and even in places such as New Zealand, one sees that they certainly have been able to make a real difference not only by scrutinising government activity but also by having a look at those complex issues. I look forward to my role as the chair of the Law, Justice and Safety Committee. I believe that with a bipartisan approach we will be able to tackle issues of the day important to all Queenslanders and make a real difference. I commend the bill to the House.