

Clauses 28 and 29 put and passed.**Clause 30: Annual report about covert search warrants -**

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Amendments were foreshadowed by the member for Hillarys that sought to have the report tabled within 21 days rather than “as soon as practicable”, as provided in the clause. On the basis of further discussions, I move -

Page 28, line 2 - To delete “as soon as practicable” and substitute “within 30 days”.

That is a reasonable time in which the minister can table the report. Subclause (2) provides that the report about covert search warrants may form part of the annual report submitted to the minister under the Financial Administration and Audit Act. Amended subclause (3) will read -

If the report does not form part of that annual report, the Minister must, within 30 days after receiving it, cause it to be tabled before each house of Parliament.

That is reasonable. It will ensure that the report is tabled in both houses of Parliament in a timely way.

The SPEAKER: Will the member for Hillarys confirm that he does not intend to proceed with the amendments to this clause in his name?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Yes, Mr Speaker. In view of the conversations the minister and I had behind the chair on this clause, I will not move the amendments in my name.

This amendment follows a conversation behind the chair. Those conversations are always a very good way to reach compromises on legislation. Both sides end up being happy with the final legislation that leaves this place.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I am feeling very bloodied and bruised! Well, I’m not, really.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I have been as gentle as anything with the minister!

Mrs M.H. Roberts: He’s been so cruel to me!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I could not help but laugh at the last few lines in the speech I made yesterday. I burst out laughing at the comments I made but I could not remember making them. When I shared them with the minister she pointed to her retaliation in the next paragraph. I felt rather bruised and hurt then, so the boot is on the other foot!

Getting back to this most important amendment, I was concerned that this clause provided that “the report may form part of the annual report submitted to the Minister”. I felt that there should be some compulsion for the report to be tabled in the house. After discussions with the minister, it was agreed that an amendment to subclause (3) would ensure that the minister presents that report to Parliament. It does not matter whether it is in the annual report of the WA Police; it will be tabled in Parliament at an appropriate time. My amendment sought to make it within 21 days but I was happy to compromise with the minister. The time frame is not much longer than 21 days, but it is shorter than six months. This clause will ensure that both houses of Parliament receive the information they should receive in a respectable and responsible time. Again, I am happy to agree with the compromised amendment the minister and I have worked out on this clause.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I draw the minister’s attention to subclause (1)(i). The subclause details in paragraphs (a) to (i) the type of information in the annual report that will be tabled in Parliament. On my reading of the list, it appears that they are very sound aspects that should be reported to Parliament. However, I seek some reassurance from the minister on paragraph (i) that the sensitivities of covert operations will not be disclosed advertently or inadvertently. I would like to hear the minister’s views about paragraph (i), which states -

any other information that the Minister requests the Commissioner to include in relation to covert search warrants.

Clearly, paragraphs (a) to (h) relate to the number of applications made, rejected etc. However, the last paragraph is a bit of a foot in the door in that it leaves the door open for the provision of any other information that may be required. I am concerned that the commissioner may be compelled at some time to disclose sensitivities that are very important to operations.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Essentially, paragraph (i) is a catch-all provision, insofar as there may be matters that were not included in the annual report. Members, either in government or in opposition, may at some stage say that other information should be provided in these reports. This provision gives the minister the ability to do that. I certainly give an assurance from my point of view, and I expect from future ministers’ points of view too, that no minister would ask the commissioner to disclose matters that could in any way jeopardise any ongoing investigation or affect any security issue to do with the Police Service that would tip-off terrorists and the like. I cannot think of too many other matters that the member would want. We have tried to make the list as comprehensive as possible. Members might, for

AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY, VOTE RIGGING ALLEGATIONS

182. Mr R.F. JOHNSON to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

I remind the minister that the police are now investigating the complaints of Senator Mark Bishop relating to alleged vote rigging and fraud within the Australian Labor Party.

- (1) Will the minister admit that there is now a clear and direct conflict of interest between her role as Minister for Police and her role as President of the Australian Labor Party while the Police Service is investigating these allegations?
- (2) Will the minister stand aside as the Minister for Police while the complaints are investigated?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:

- (1)-(2) The simple answer is no, because I do not have any role in the investigation. That is done by the Police Service.