

BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION BILL

(Serial 146)

**BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION
(CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL**

(Serial 147)

Continued from 29 February 1996.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, this important legislation will set in place a new regime for the registration of births, deaths and marriages in the Territory. I indicate that the opposition supports it. I have had the opportunity to be briefed by the Registrar-General, Phil Timney, and by Robert Bradshaw, a former Registrar-General who, I understand, has shepherded the legislation through a number of state committees. It is not an area that lends itself to vituperative partisan debate which is not an activity that I like at the best of times. I am relieved that, in this case, it is not necessary.

I place on record some of the important issues that officers have had to grapple with, such as those relating to data exchange and the protection of privacy in that regard. Honourable members will recall the cancer registration legislation that was sponsored in this Assembly by the late Don Dale. There is an interconnection between cancer research and registration and the database that is maintained by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. On the one hand, it is important that access be available for bona fide research purposes and, on the other hand, that privacy be protected. I appreciated the opportunity to be briefed about the data exchange agreement with Territory Health Services. I note that clause 42 of the *Births Deaths and Marriages Registration Bill* provides that information from the register may be provided for epidemiological research. That was one of the issues that was brought home to me.

One of the quirky issues involved here is the matter of bad names and the anecdotes associated with people who want to change their names. It is simply not possible for a person to change his name from 'Mr Richard Setter' to 'Sir Richard Setter'. You cannot whack a 'Sir' on your name by deed poll. Quirky issues of that kind may bear an element of delight.

I note that the legislation is based on a model drafted by the South Australian Parliamentary Counsel that aims to be part of a national scheme for births, deaths and marriages. I have referred already to the question of prohibited names. A more contentious issue is the provisions governing the naming of children that distinguish between the children of married parents and the children of parents who are not married to each other, and specify the circumstances in which the mother's name is taken or the father's name is taken. The other key issue is the question of an open or closed registry. I note the policy decision to adopt a closed registry, with steps for access on the basis, for example, of the epidemiological research purpose that I referred to earlier.

I indicate that, in those terms, the opposition broadly supports the bill. I have had my attention drawn today to an amendment schedule. The intention is to amend the *Criminal Code* and the *Rights of the Terminally Ill Act*. I note that section 267 of the *Criminal Code* is to be repealed and that there is to be a technical amendment to the *Rights of the Terminally Ill Act*. I am sorry that the government is bringing this legislation on for debate now because I