THE SENATE

BILLS

Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Convergence Review and Other Measures) Bill 2013, Television Licence Fees Amendment Bill 2013

Second Reading

SPEECH

Wednesday, 20 March 2013

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE
SPEECH

Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (20:27): I rise tonight to speak about the Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Convergence Review and Other Measures) Bill 2013 and the Television Licence Fee Amendment Bill 2013. The guillotining of legislation leaves me at a loss. When I came to this place, I thought it was going to be a house of review. For the life of me I cannot understand how we can be a house of review when legislation is continually guillotined.

I do not doubt that there are probably some credible things in both of these bills presented to the House, but I question whether these two bills before the Senate tonight are the sweets before the poison. People often say to me that the devil is in the detail, or in this case, I fear, the devil is in the lack of detail. I do not know how anybody could possibly get their heads around such a complex couple of pieces of legislation, leading onto what we have got to look at tomorrow, and do these bills and do our constituents—the people we represent in this place in our states—the duty of care that we owe them as members of the Senate. We have got issues here in the bills after this of the Public Interest Media Advocate. I ask, who polices the police? We are on the verge of giving things to a bureaucracy that we do not even know the detail of, and people in the community honestly fear what this is about.

People I speak to quite often have criticisms of the media, and there are a lot of injustices done and people's characters besmirched in print and in television. But anybody who cares to look at some of the other forms of media will find that there are greater atrocities there that go unchecked. So be careful what you wish for because as you erode the rights of one you erode the rights of all. This will come back to haunt whoever occupies the government benches and for whomever holds the balance of power in this parliament after the next election. Holding the balance of power is not a licence to bludgeon the government, no matter who that government is; it is a privilege and it is a great responsibility for whoever holds that balance of power not to guillotine legislation, but to give the Senate the right that it deserves to do what it was elected to do by the people—that is, to vet legislation.

So as much as there may be some good things in this, I cannot honestly say to my constituents in Victoria that I can vote for any piece of legislation that has just been rammed through this place. It means we as senators cannot do our duty to our constituents. I will not be voting for any parts of any of these bills because this is an abomination of the review process of this house.