




Speech By  
**Dr Christian Rowan**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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**ELECTORAL AND OTHER LEGISLATION (ACCOUNTABILITY, INTEGRITY AND OTHER MATTERS) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (6.14 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Amendment Bill 2019. Once again, on the eve of a Queensland state election, the Palaszczuk state Labor government is forcibly shifting the state electoral goalposts and rigging our democracy in their own favour. We can be in no doubt that this is for Labor's own electoral benefit. Sadly, in Queensland we have seen this all before.

All Queenslanders, including residents of the electorate of Moggill, well remember the events of April 2016 when the Palaszczuk state Labor government decided to introduce an amendment to abandon optional preferential voting and reintroduce compulsory preferential voting for Queensland. That was done by Labor with just 18 minutes notice and absolutely no consultation at the time. There was no reason for the Palaszczuk state Labor government to scrap optional preferential voting other than for the Labor Party in Queensland to secure the preferences and votes of the Greens. We need to realise that that was not consistent with the Fitzgerald principles. It would be interesting to know what a former Labor premier, the late Wayne Goss, would have thought about that at that time and about what is happening today. That is exactly what happened: Labor was angling for the votes and preferences of the Greens at that time.

Today the Labor Party occupies the state government benches because they were elected off the back of Greens preferences. That was the intent at the time they changed the system from optional preferential voting to compulsory preferential voting. In 2018, respected ABC political analyst Antony Green observed—

Labor's re-introduction of full preferential voting was driven by concern over Green preferences exhausting. Labor lost the Northgate Ward at the 2016 Brisbane City Council elections through Green preferences exhausting and no doubt the party did not want a repeat performance at the next state election.

Come the 2020 state election, in just over 130 days, the situation will be no different as Labor seeks the preference vote of every Greens supporter in Queensland, aided by a system of voting that is to be rigged in Labor's favour. It is a true sign of a desperate and despicable state Labor government that consistently seeks to amend our electoral laws each and every time they approach an election, for fear of losing their stranglehold on the state of Queensland.

Not content with abolishing Queensland's well-established system of optional preferential voting, the Palaszczuk state Labor government is now seeking to further force through a raft of extraordinary changes to our electoral system. As I have said, this is not consistent with Fitzgerald principles. This includes significantly limiting donations to candidates and political parties, as well as the maximum amount that can be spent on elections. Specifically, under chapter 2 of this bill, the maximum amount that can be spent is: \$58,000 by an endorsed candidate, \$87,000 by an independent candidate, \$92,000 by a party in any single electorate in which it endorses a candidate, and \$87,000 by a third party in any single electorate and no more than \$1 million in the aggregate.

Such a politically convenient amendment is further proof of the Palaszczuk state Labor government's trashing of and launching a full assault on our democracy. Queenslanders know that Labor is beholden to the unions and this is nothing more than the Palaszczuk state Labor government doing the bidding of the unions. Such changes arbitrarily limit donations from individuals and corporations and yet, at the same time, provide for an incredible advantage to Queensland Labor and Queensland unions. In fact, under this legislation, Queensland's 26 trade unions will effectively be able to spend more than \$2.2 million per electorate. That is an extraordinarily unbalanced electoral advantage that strikes at the heart of democracy.

This is nothing less than a hostile takeover of our democracy. The hand up to the unions does not end there. Through chapter 3 of this bill, restrictions on signage will be imposed in the lead-up to and on election day. Whilst noting that the maximum number of signs that may be displayed by or for a candidate, registered political party or third party for pre-poll voting is two small signs in each designated area, it is a different story altogether when looking at an ordinary polling booth. Specifically, the maximum number of election signs at an ordinary polling booth for a candidate or party will be six signs, comprised of large signs—to a maximum number of four—and small signs. A third party is permitted to display a maximum of four signs, comprised of large signs—to a maximum number of two—and small signs.

At ordinary polling booths in electorates all across Queensland, including the electorate of Moggill, we can expect to see the democratically unfair situation where political candidates and parties, especially those under the banner of the Liberal National Party, will be grossly outnumbered by unions and other Labor third parties in the signage that will be able to be displayed on booths. The Queensland Palaszczuk Labor government has no shame when trying to rig this to their advantage.

Further changes under this legislation pertain to new integrity offences so as to create a criminal offence for a minister who knowingly fails to disclose a conflict of interest with the intent to dishonestly gain a benefit for themselves, or another person, or cause detriment to another person. A new offence will also be created for where a minister intentionally fails to comply with the obligations on members of parliament to register their interests with the Clerk of the Parliament with dishonest intent to obtain a benefit for themselves, or another person, or cause detriment to another.

I heard the member for Capalaba in his contribution earlier making some comments in relation to the Leader of the Opposition, but the Labor Party here in Queensland certainly cannot talk about matters of integrity and accountability related to others when they should be looking at their own house. I would encourage the member for Capalaba to look to his own side of parliament in relation to the myriad of integrity and accountability offences that have taken place under the Palaszczuk Labor government over the last five years.

We all know why such offences have had to be created and yet, true to form, the Palaszczuk state Labor government deliberately chose to ignore the clearly articulated intent of the Crime and Corruption Commission's recommendations on this matter. The Palaszczuk state Labor government is simply not fit to legislate on matters pertaining to accountability and integrity. All Queenslanders have seen scandal after scandal with respect to matters of accountability and integrity by various Palaszczuk state Labor government ministers over the last five years.

Indeed, the principles of accountability and integrity are the very antithesis of the so-called principles of the Labor Party. It has to be said that integrity failure is in the Labor Party's DNA. We have seen only this week what is happening with respect to the Victorian division of the Labor Party and the serious matters of corruption, and that three ministers have had to resign, as well as the sordid history of scandals and corruption within the New South Wales Labor Party. On accountability, integrity and electoral matters, the Queensland Labor Party is hardly any different to their so called neo-Marxist comrades south of the border.

Because of the actions of members, including the previously elected representatives of the Queensland Labor Party, our state had to endure the embarrassment of the Shepherdson inquiry. The member for Caloundra referred to the Shepherdson inquiry which was commissioned to investigate serious allegations of electoral fraud and branch stacking within the Queensland Labor Party. Who can forget that at the time that led to the resignation of the then deputy premier, Jim Elder, and also the former member for Woodridge, Mike Kaiser, who has now returned as an adviser to the Labor government? It was also because of the actions of the then member for Sandgate that a senior Queensland Labor Party minister was found guilty of corruptly receiving secret commissions during his time in office and was sentenced to prison at that time. Who could forget those matters at the time?

In the last two terms of the Queensland Parliament alone, we have seen serious allegations against a number of serving and former members of the Queensland state Labor government being investigated by the Crime and Corruption Commission. In fact, such serious matters have not been

confined to just the state Labor government, as we have seen through the corrupt actions of Labor aligned members to the former Ipswich City Council administration which led to it having to be dissolved. Thankfully, the residents of Ipswich City now have elected a great mayor in Teresa Harding who is doing a great job out there in Ipswich and is wasting no time in cleaning up the mess left by the previous Labor aligned mayor and a number of councillors.

On matters pertaining to electoral accountability and integrity, it exists in this legislation entirely in name only. As if to further underscore Labor's complete disdain for any sort of integrity and accountability, it was not until approximately nine o'clock last night that the state Labor government circulated some 100 pages containing 229 amendments to this bill. That is an absolute farce. This bill should be seen for what it is. It is the Labor Party here in Queensland trying to rig the next state election.