

Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025

Submission No: 030
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Publication: Making the submission and your name public

I make this submission as a Queensland voter concerned with the integrity and public credibility of the State's electoral system. While the Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025 is presented as strengthening fairness, several of its key provisions risk weakening public confidence, particularly those relating to property developer donations and the use of loans to fund State election campaigns.

Removing the ban on political donations from property developers for State elections is a step backwards. The existing ban reflects long-standing community concern about the relationship between political funding, planning decisions, and development outcomes. These concerns are not limited to local government. State governments exert substantial influence over planning frameworks, infrastructure priorities, and major development approvals. Restricting the ban to local elections ignores this reality and is likely to be perceived as reopening a channel for influence that Queenslanders reasonably believed had been closed. Even where no misconduct occurs, the appearance of influence matters, and this change risks undermining trust in State-level decision-making.

Allowing loans from financial institutions to fund electoral expenditure raises similar issues. While loans are not donations, they create ongoing financial relationships between political actors and private institutions, potentially extending beyond the election period. Without strong transparency and enforcement mechanisms, loans risk becoming an indirect form of influence rather than a neutral funding tool. The Bill does not sufficiently address how these risks would be mitigated in practice.

These concerns are further compounded by applying donation caps on a financial-year basis rather than across an electoral cycle, which risks allowing greater cumulative financial influence during an election period without breaching annual limits.

Taken together, these changes risk reducing, rather than restoring, confidence in the independence of Queensland's electoral system. I urge the Committee to reconsider the removal of the property developer donation ban for State elections and to approach electoral loans with significantly greater caution and stronger safeguards.