

Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025

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This submission raises concerns that the proposed Bill does not meet its stated objectives of improving fairness, equality, and public confidence in Queensland's electoral system. Several measures risk reducing democratic participation, increasing undue influence, and weakening transparency and accountability.

Prohibiting people serving sentences of one year or more from voting undermines the principle of equal democratic participation. Voting is a civic right, and removing it disproportionately affects First Nations people and disadvantaged communities, further entrenching inequality rather than restoring fairness. There is limited evidence that disenfranchisement improves public confidence in elections.

Shifting donation caps to a financial-year basis risks weakening their effectiveness. This change may allow large donors to maximise influence by timing donations strategically, reducing the intent of caps to limit undue influence and creating an uneven playing field between well-funded interests and community-based candidates.

Allowing property developers and related industry bodies to donate to State elections significantly undermines public confidence. Property development is closely linked to state-level planning and infrastructure decisions, creating clear risks of real or perceived corruption. Narrowing the ban to local government elections ignores these risks and contradicts the objective of restoring trust in the electoral process.

Permitting loans from financial institutions may advantage major parties and established candidates with greater access to credit, disadvantaging independents and smaller parties. This change risks entrenching political inequality rather than promoting fairness.

Removing Electoral Commission oversight of party preselections weakens transparency and accountability. Preselection processes play a critical role in democratic choice, and reducing independent oversight risks internal practices that may exclude members or disadvantage certain candidates, undermining confidence in political parties and the broader system.

Relaxing authorisation rules for election materials, including allowing post office boxes, reduces transparency about who is responsible for political messaging. Clear and accessible authorisation is essential to combat misinformation and maintain voter trust.

Taken together, these changes are more likely to weaken fairness, equality, and public confidence than strengthen them. The Bill appears to benefit established political and financial interests at the expense of transparency, accountability, and inclusive democratic participation. For these reasons, the proposed reforms should be reconsidered or substantially amended.