

Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025

Submission No: 045
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To the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to several provisions in the *Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025*. While the Bill is presented as improving fairness, many of its measures would instead weaken transparency, increase the influence of money in politics, and reduce public confidence in Queensland's democratic system.

1. Prohibiting prisoners serving sentences of one year or more from voting

The proposal to lower the threshold for prisoner disenfranchisement from three years to one year of imprisonment unnecessarily expands the number of citizens excluded from voting. Voting is a fundamental democratic right and restricting it should be a measure of last resort.

Broadening disenfranchisement disproportionately affects disadvantaged and marginalised communities, who are overrepresented in incarceration statistics. It also undermines rehabilitation and civic reintegration by disconnecting individuals from democratic participation rather than encouraging responsibility and engagement.

2. Applying political donation caps on a financial-year basis

Applying existing political donation caps on a financial-year basis, rather than across an electoral cycle, effectively increases the total amount that individuals and organisations can donate over the life of a Parliament. This change advantages wealthy donors and risks further entrenching money as a determining factor in political success.

Such a shift moves Queensland away from a level playing field and undermines the principle that elections should be contests of ideas and public support, not fundraising capacity.

3. Removing the ban on political donations from property developers for State elections

The proposed removal of the ban on political donations from property developers for State elections is deeply concerning. Property developers have direct and substantial financial interests in government decisions relating to planning, zoning, infrastructure, and land use. Allowing them to donate creates an inherent conflict of interest and raises the risk — or at least the perception — that public policy could be shaped by private financial interests rather than the public good.

This prohibition was introduced following corruption investigations and recommendations aimed at restoring public trust in government. Reversing this reform risks undoing important safeguards against undue influence.

4. Allowing loans from financial institutions for electoral expenditure

Permitting loans from financial institutions to be used for electoral expenditure risks encouraging excessive campaign spending and further advantages well-resourced parties with access to credit. This may disadvantage smaller parties and independent candidates, weakening political competition and diversity within Queensland's democratic system.

5. Removing Electoral Commission oversight of party preselection ballots

The proposal to remove Electoral Commission of Queensland oversight of party preselection ballots reduces independent scrutiny of internal party processes. Oversight plays an important role in ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability in candidate selection.

Removing this oversight risks increasing factional or insider control and undermines public confidence that candidates are being selected through genuinely democratic processes.

6. Amending authorisation requirements for election materials and how-to-vote cards

Allowing post office boxes and other prescribed addresses to be used in authorisation statements for election materials weakens transparency. Clear and identifiable authorisation requirements are essential so voters can understand who is responsible for political messaging.

Reducing transparency in political advertising increases the risk of misleading or anonymous campaigning and diminishes voter trust.

7. Public funding already exists — private influence should be reduced, not expanded

Queensland already provides public election funding to registered political parties and eligible candidates who receive at least 4 % of formal first-preference votes. This funding is calculated on a dollar-per-vote basis and is capped by actual eligible electoral expenditure. The intent of this system is to partially reimburse campaign costs in proportion to genuine voter support and to reduce reliance on private donations.

Given that this public funding framework already exists, expanding private political donations — particularly from business interests such as property developers — runs counter to the goal of reducing undue financial influence. If reform is required, it should move toward **further limiting private donations**, including those from corporations and industry bodies, rather than expanding them.

Conclusion

Taken together, the measures in this Bill risk increasing the influence of money and vested interests in Queensland politics, weakening transparency and oversight, and

reducing public trust in the electoral system. Rather than restoring electoral fairness, these changes move Queensland in the opposite direction.

I urge the Committee to reject or substantially amend these provisions to protect democratic integrity, transparency, and fairness for all Queenslanders.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.