

Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025

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CORRUPTION PREVENTION
NETWORK QUEENSLAND

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The Secretariat
Parliamentary Justice, Integrity and
Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Parliamentary Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee about the Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025.

I am making this submission on behalf of the Corruption Prevention Network Queensland (CPNQ). The Management Committee of CPNQ has approved this submission. CPNQ is an incorporated association that provides networking and professional development for anticorruption practitioners and others. One of our objects is to develop strategies to prevent corruption and fraud.

We are concerned by the Bill's proposal to remove the ban on political donations from property developers and related industry bodies for State elections and target the ban to local government elections only. The ban was introduced in 2017 as a corruption prevention strategy following a recommendation from Queensland's Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC). The CCC's Operation Belcarra investigated local councillor conduct in relation to elections and donations. That report highlighted that there have been recurring corruption investigations in Queensland involving political donations from developers since the former Criminal Justice Commission first investigated the issue in 1991.¹

Similarly, the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) warns against recurring corruption involving planning and development as follows:

When it comes to the management and balancing of environmental, social and economic resources for the development of land, personal interests can

¹ See p. viii <https://www.ccc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-08/Operation-Belcarra-Report-2017.pdf>

motivate some to make improper decisions. Instances of corruption in town planning have appeared frequently in the ICAC's 30-year history.

Town planning can influence the value of land both directly (through development approvals) and indirectly (through planning controls set by NSW planning legislation and various state or local planning instruments).

Significant windfall profits (and losses) are possible by someone who owns, develops or has some other interest in land. The risk of corruption in town planning can emerge in circumstances where the same person decides to secure a profit or avoid a loss by inappropriately influencing one or more public officials involved in an approval (or refusal) or in the creation of planning controls.²

The South Australian Independent Commission Against Corruption also warns of the corruption risk in planning and development and corruption relating to influencing public officials involved in planning:

Planning and development is a complex area of public administration where corruption weaknesses can easily materialise. The planning system is often contentious and adversarial in nature, with high levels of discretionary decision making and subjective assessment. The influencing of planning officials on even minor amendments to planning controls can have substantial effects on the value of land and developments. Such impacts can increase the opportunities for impropriety among developers and planning officials. Interstate integrity agencies have uncovered many examples of corrupt conduct in this area.³

There are both recent and past examples of political donations from developers raising corruption risks and issues for both State and local governments. The Victorian Independent Broad Based Anticorruption Commission report on Operation Sandon highlighted this risk with the former Premier of that State implicated in the report.

In 2009 the former Queensland Labor Government's reputation was damaged by allegations of developers using former Government Ministers to lobby for changes to the Southeast Queensland Regional Plan in favour of property developers. Despite the allegations not being borne out by two investigations by the former Crime and Misconduct Commission, the stain on the Government was long lasting and changes were made to lobbying rules arising from issues uncovered by the investigation.

Queensland is currently in a phase of rapid and necessary development to address both the national housing crisis and the need to develop infrastructure and facilities for the

² <https://www.icac.nsw.gov.au/newsletter/issue53/workshop.html>

³ <https://www.icac.sa.gov.au/indexable-assets/media-and-news/public-statements/corruption-vulnerabilities-in-the-planning-and-development-system>

2032 Olympics. The CCC's current corruption priority areas recognise this period is one where corruption risks are escalated because of the current need for rapid development and the very high value and significance of the projects involved that will require State involvement and coordination. It is logical therefore that the CCC's current seven priority areas include both corruption by elected officials and corruption in complex procurement, including major infrastructure and development projects.⁴

Public confidence in the integrity of Government is bolstered when there are strong corruption prevention laws and measures in place. The ban on political donations from developers in Queensland helps support that public confidence and helps to minimise the risk of corruption occurring. CPNQ urges the Government to maintain the ban in order to prevent corruption and maintain public confidence in the integrity of Government.

Yours faithfully



James (Jim) Meyers
CPNQ Treasurer



⁴ https://www.ccc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/Docs/Publications/CCC/Corruption-priorities_Factsheet-Oct-2025.pdf