

Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025

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Submission on proposed Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025

I oppose this bill and it's Orwellian title.

The Bill's stated objectives are to "improve and restore fairness and equality to the regulation of elections in Queensland and increase public confidence in Queensland's electoral processes." In fact, it undermines it.

Property Developer donations:

How does increasing lobbyist and property developer donations to political parties increase Electoral Fairness?

In fact, it entrenches inequality by allowing those with money to potentially buy political favours.

Allowing property developers to donate to State political parties is particularly problematic in the middle of a housing crisis. The answer to this crisis rests in governments increasing housing supply and reducing developer profits (eg through rental caps such as exist in the ACT – where property developer donations are banned). Allowing property developers to fund political campaigns is in clear conflict with the public interest. Will we see big government subsidies to property developers to provide "housing"? Will we see, as we have in Brisbane City Council, developer friendly changes to planning rules that increase the pressure on the public purse by removing developer costs?

It is not true that only local councils are at risk of corruption by property developer donations. It is well known and obvious that there are clear links between local councils, especially Brisbane City Council and State LNP coffers. State legislation eg South East Queensland Regional Plan, guides local council planning rules that directly affect property developers and developers are blatant in their push for changes to this legislation that would benefit their profits not community need: [Controversial \\$200m Wynnum CBD high rise plans scrapped | The Courier Mail](#) The current ban on property developer donations exists for a good reason - why create a corruption issue? Employed families are living in tents in Queensland – the government is supposed to work for these families. It needs to be able to make tough decisions not be beholden to political donors.

The Bill is purportedly in response to the CCC Belcerra report "A blueprint for integrity and addressing corruption risk in local government" – yet it waters down donation restrictions by property developers to candidates in local Council elections by allowing "restricted donation statement's" (Clauses 32 to 34) – essentially Mr Cashed Up Property Developer can write on a piece of paper that the Big Fat Cheque is not for "electoral purposes" and the Candidate will face no sanctions. What could go wrong?

I oppose removing the ban on political donations from property developers and related industry bodies for State elections, as well as refining and targeting the ban for local government electoral purposes – by apparently creating loopholes whereby property developers can freely donate to local Council candidates.

Increasing donation limits and allowing loans for electoral campaigns:

The Bill's objective is to increase public confidence in Queensland's electoral processes. The perception of money buying votes was a key concern of the Belcerra Blueprint for Integrity... the answer to this concern is not to increase the amount of money that can be donated or by allowing financial institutions to lend large amounts of money.

The reason this is currently not allowed is because it represents a potential conflict of interest with regards Candidates being able to borrow money to campaign and then being elected to office where they are responsible for regulating financial institutions and literally "owe" their donors.

Instead of allowing rich donors to be able to donate more, all donations by individuals and entities should be limited to \$5000 per electoral cycle. This would allow more grassroots campaigning and donations and even the playing field.

I oppose allowing loans from financial institutions to be used for electoral expenditure for State elections.

Allowing registered political parties to conduct preselection ballots without the oversight of the Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ)

Supposedly this is to reduce administration burden on the ECQ. Has the ECQ asked for this administration burden to be lifted? If not, it seems this is more about reducing transparency surrounding the pre-selection process rather than strengthening the ECQ

I support strengthening the ECQ by increasing its funding and scope to regulate free and transparent elections and increasing penalties for candidates who do not comply with election rules.

Changing authorisation requirements for election materials and how-to-vote cards for State elections to apply to the period 12 months before an ordinary general election.

What constitutes electoral material? And how can one know there will be an election in 12 months? This seems a weak recommendation aimed at curbing free speech. If Jo Bloggs in the community wants to campaign against a sitting member's actions in parliament, that's called democracy – it isn't an "election campaign".

Authorisation requirements for election materials should be required once the election has been called. There should be strong penalties for using public money for thinly veiled partisan electoral campaigning dressed up as "community service announcements" or partisan branding (eg recent changes to State logo to reflect LNP colours, appropriation of Brisbane City Council logo by LNP candidates during 2024 election).

Increasing restrictions on voting by persons serving sentences of imprisonment or detention.

The right of citizens to vote is implied in Australia's Constitution. A sentence bestowed by the courts is the sentence – it doesn't negate other rights such as those of shelter and medical care and the right to vote. We do not have a perfect justice system which disproportionately incarcerates some demographics more than others. Removing the right to vote from certain demographics sets a dangerous and anti-democratic precedent. For young offenders in particular, we are all better served if they feel they can re-engage in society.

I oppose restrictions on the right to vote by prisoners, particularly when recent election campaigns have relied heavily on slogans/policies which affect inmates.

The Queensland Crime and Corruption Commission considers the four key principles of good government to be equity, transparency, integrity and accountability. ([Operation Belcarra: A blueprint for integrity and addressing corruption risk in local government](#)) The proposed Bill pays lip service to these ideals while undermining them. The explanatory notes state that there are no alternative methods for achieving the policy objectives to improve and restore fairness and equality to the regulation of elections in Queensland and increase public confidence in Queensland's electoral processes. This is not true:

- Equity requires that everyone is able to participate equally in the democratic process. This includes prisoners and average citizens who can't match major lobbyist donations. Political donations should be capped at \$5000 per individual per electoral cycle.
- Transparency. "Good government requires complete transparency about who candidates are, the interests and affiliations they have, their relationships with other candidates and the sources of their campaign funding." The QEC should be strengthened to improve transparency via an easy to navigate donation register and website and stronger penalties for those that break election rules.
- "Integrity. Good government requires that corruption risks are minimised... (and) needs to be perceived to be so." Allowing property developer donations in the middle of a housing crisis is poor form.
- Accountability. There need to be strong penalties for breaking electoral rules.