

Conny Turni



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Dear Mr Palaszczuk,

Government has introduced Australia's first real-time electronic donation disclosure system.

That system has already failed in the first council election. In the Ipswich council by-election Deputy Mayor Tully did not declare his donation until last minute and it became available on line after the election. Donations coming in for Councilor Antonioli were not disclosed until five days after the election. Hence at the election people were not aware who the main donor was, which was the main aim of the policy.

With this in mind it is expected that the laws will be pushed to the limit. We are talking about breaking a cycle of corruption that is very sophisticated. Pisasale has had donations from individuals on his donation list way back in 2016, which was really hard to trace back to the original developers as none of the links were straight forward. This was during a time when it was not illegal and still is not illegal and there is and will not be a sufficient penalty that will deter this sort of corrupt behaviour to the democratic system. In other words, it is very easy to find ways around that proposed bill.

The only restriction proposed is on property developers, their close associates, such as related corporations, directors and spouses, as according to the CCC other types of donors do not demonstrate the same risk of actual or perceived corruption in Queensland local government as property developers. However, if we ban property developers from donating, how do we prevent the property developer not to shift money through other none-related companies or lawyers to shift donations for them. To push a bill through with this little thought about the actual problem is absolutely negligent. It will not stop what is being tried to achieve, it is a quick fix such as the real-time donation system, that failed at the first election.

My point is that you need to go much further than only property developers.

At the local level, there needs to be a ban on donations by:

- political parties,
- by unions,
- by lobbyist
- by LGAQ
- by lawyers

The other point is what are we calling a developer. In Ipswich in the last election the company donating lots of money was Nugrow, which had at the time an application before council to increase their dump size. This is not a developer, yet will benefit enormously if the candidate wins. Needless to say that the candidate won and has not taken any action against the most complaint about company relating to the issues surrounding the company.

Hence the ban needs to cater for that as well and the bill should ban:

- companies involved with the local council, such as through permits or through the tender process
- companies that have project with councils
- companies that can possible benefit from donating to the council

Donations need to be explained with interest and involvement in the council. Then there needs to be an audit on large donations and how the conflict of interest is handled. That means there needs to be transparency at each meeting and it is not up to the councillor if he calls it a minor issue and then still sits in on the decision, as it has been done in the Ipswich City Council meetings. An example of this is the council meeting held on Friday, where mayor Antonioli received donation from a landfill company yet presented the landfill report from the committee, but failed to declare his donations received from the landfill operator. The committee meetings are held outside the council meetings, which have no minutes and hence there is no traceability how the conflict of interest was being handled. A record needs to be kept by the councillor when dealings with the donor and what exactly the councillor has done to avoid the conflict of interest, which then needs to be audited.

That is the procedure in all other government departments and should be the same for donations.

At state government you have the problem with lobbyist such as the Chinese government lobbying through donations at elections, you have all mayor banks lobbying through donations and you have huge co-operations donating.

Hence the problem with this new bill is:

- It will be short lived, as banning developer's donation will only shift donations to be given through other people
- Developer's donations might be the most obvious donations and hence being marked as the highest risk. However, big companies pose an equal risk, such as companies asking for extensions or permits or anything that involves permission to be granted.
- Other donors need to be stopped as well, as they might be used by developers, such lobbyists, LGAQ, unions or political parties.

It seems that there was no proper thought given how the council actually works and that decisions are not always made in the council meetings, that reports are written with recommendations and these reports influence the council decisions. Hence, some more planning and consultations of councils should go into this bill before a decision is made.

I would like you to explain to me in clear English how you came up with this decision to present this bill in such a short time frame without obvious thought about consequences of this bill in relation to the effectiveness of this bill. A bill that is so clearly short sighted and made in the absence of

knowledge how the local council functions, how donations are being made already through third persons and what kind of businesses influence the decisions made in council.

Kind regards

Conny