



Speech by
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ELECTORAL FRAUD

Mr BEANLAND (Indoorroopilly—LP) (6.54 p.m.): The allegations in the weekend media about the membership of the Labor Party branch in Charleville made for interesting reading. Those reading the article in the Courier-Mail could have been excused for thinking that they were reading the plot of a new Monty Python movie rather than a saga involving one of the largest political parties in the country. This story has all the elements of a first-rate comedy and, of course, political intrigue. It purportedly involves well-known Labor identities, a pub and people who have been described, unfortunately, as "mad". If it were not for the suggestion that people with a disability were being taken advantage of in all of this, I would have dismissed this as a bit of a joke and more Labor branch stacking—something for which Labor and, in particular, the AWU have now become famous and for which they have now entered the Guinness Book of Records.

As the shadow Minister for Disability Services, I take very seriously any suggestions that people with a disability are being exploited. Not only do I find this behaviour offensive; I think it is one of the lowest of low acts by Labor. The question is: have the electoral rolls in Charleville also been corrupted? Charleville is not a big community by any means. It is a small, homely town that has played an important role in the history of this State and in the development of our vast rural resources. I am quite sure that many people in Charleville would be appalled to know what has been going on at the local Labor branch.

The suggestion that this branch is made up of members with psychiatric problems is of great concern. It is of concern because it raises the speculation that some unscrupulous operators have been taking advantage of people to further their own political interests. It is also of concern because this particular branch is the home of AWU supremo Bill Ludwig, the organisational head of the AWU, which fondly calls this branch one of its own. It is the same faction that Deputy Premier Elder and so many Labor members opposite belong to.

We all know that Mr Ludwig has very little to do with Charleville these days. He has long shed the country roots that helped him climb his way to the top of the union ladder. However, I am sure that Mr Ludwig is as concerned as I am about the possibility of exploitation in his very own branch of the Labor Party. It is not acceptable that this kind of exploitation is allowed to occur. The community has an obligation to protect the interests of those who are not quite able to look after themselves.

Unfortunately, the Charleville community would not have known what was happening in the local Labor branch and specifically within the confines of Corones Hotel. The Courier-Mail reported that one third of the 47 branch members of the Charleville branch of the ALP lived at Corones Hotel. This means that more than 15 people lived at the hotel, an unusual fact in itself. It also means that more than 15 people living at the hotel were coincidentally all members of the Australian Labor Party. That no doubt leaves itself open for more electoral corruption.

There is either something special in the beer at Charleville or it may be that perhaps these people just like fishing. I note from some promotional material that Corones Hotel offers modern ground floor units, ensuite hotel rooms and heritage hotel rooms with original bathrooms. It has a spacious marble tiled foyer, a log burning fire in winter and deep, comfy chairs for all year round relaxation which obviously attract a lot of the Labor Party. By all accounts this is a very nice place and it is quite possible to understand how people could just settle in and call this place home, as the Labor Party has done, and have their addresses at Corones.

As we have seen a lot in the media of late, many people with disabilities live in hostel-type accommodation. We have also seen the kinds of abuses that have occurred at these facilities, and now obviously we have electoral abuse as well. I am not suggesting in any way whatsoever that there has been abuse by the management of Coronas itself; however, I do raise concern about the way that management appears to have abused the trust placed in it by vulnerable residents. Caring for people with disabilities is a serious responsibility; it is not an easy job and at times it can be quite frustrating. However, it is no excuse for abusing confidences and exploiting the trust of innocent people. I trust that the Beattie Labor Government will do everything within its power to step in and protect those who have been mistreated in this manner and that we do not have another repeat of the Townsville performance of more electoral corruption.
