



Speech by

KAREN STRUTHERS

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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CRIME AND MISCONDUCT BILL

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (6.03 p.m.): There is a view that corruption flourishes in conditions of underdevelopment. We know that countries such as Nigeria, Mexico, Indonesia and many others have been riddled with corruption. But let us not be blind to the reality that corruption is equally prevalent in many developed democracies. Democracy is not a panacea for controlling corruption. If corruption is a phase that countries go through before they reach maturity, much of the developed world seems to be experiencing a second childhood. Take the revelation of serious drug-related corruption in the New South Wales Police Service as an example.

It is essential that we remain vigilant in our support for anticorruption and anticrime institutions and processes in Australia and within Queensland. I support the Premier in bringing the two anticrime, anticorruption bodies together in Queensland through this Crime and Misconduct Bill. While none of us in this House are anticrime experts, I am sure that none of us would doubt that the clout of these bodies will be strengthened with combined intelligence and investigative resources. And that is exactly what we want: the clout to wipe out paedophilia in Queensland, the clout to make it extremely difficult for the grubs who trade in illicit drugs to do business in Queensland, and the clout to make people think twice before they grease the palms of any public official or law enforcement agent in this state.

The Beattie government has proudly put Queensland on the national and international map as the Smart State. There is growing recognition among the developed and developing countries that the fight against corruption advances their national and economic interest. Queensland is no different. If we are to advance ourselves as a significant trading and business partner in the global business club, we must continue to advance our post-Fitzgerald reputation as a reformed, open and accountable state.

Mr Bredhauer: The opposition cares so much about this bill there's not one in the House—only one Independent.

Ms STRUTHERS: That is right. They are not here at all to listen. It is an important topic and they are not here. Anticorruption measures are good for business and good for the economy. Research has shown that corruption is negatively linked to the level of investment and economic growth. The more corruption, the less investment and the less economic growth.

The president of the Kuala Lumpur Society for Transparency and Integrity, Mr Aziz, stated this year that good governance, like integrity itself, is no longer the luxury of the virtuous; it is a global business necessity. He urged countries in Asia that want to remain in the mainstream of the globalised economy and benefit from foreign direct investment to review and, where necessary, reform their political and economic governance, including measures to increase transparency and accountability, to guarantee freedom of information by an act of parliament and establish an independent anticorruption agency to deal with issues of national integrity and corruption.

In the pre-Fitzgerald years under the coalition government Queensland endured a closed system of government riddled with corruption, and no Queenslander should ever forget this. The National Party government and coalition governments pre-1989 treated the Queensland public with contempt. There was no freedom of information system, there was no anticorruption system. In fact, there was no true democracy in this state. What we had was a police state where the Special Branch and corrupt elected and public officials ruled. This was little more than 10 years ago, but I think the

member for Toowoomba South has forgotten this and, in fact, does not even care about it. He is not here. None of his colleagues is here in the House to debate this bill at this time.

Mr Horan came into this chamber earlier and alleged that the shift of some criminal justice research functions from the CJC to the Premier's Department was akin to the Special Branch. I cannot see provisions in this bill that give police unfettered powers to intimidate, harass, arrest, photograph or invade the privacy of members of the public. This is what the Special Branch did under the coalition government. I cannot see provisions in this bill that give the Premier unfettered access to a corrupt Police Commissioner. This is what happened pre-1989 in Queensland. It is an absolute insult, and it is totally irresponsible for Mr Horan to liken the extended research unit to a corrupt Special Branch.

I do not want to see any dilution of the important criminal justice research activities of these bodies, and I certainly have put this question to the Premier and he has given assurances that the extended research functions in his own department will, in fact, allow a much more targeted area of research that is consistent with government policy. I support that. I think that is an important initiative.

I am a firm supporter of a well-functioning anticorruption system. Bodies such as the CJC have been vital to our reforms in this state. They need the full support of government as well as close scrutiny. They need the scrutiny to prevent any protracted investigations, any misuse of their powers—their very wide-ranging powers. The CJC, over the past decade or so, has been under siege from a number of quarters in this state, including mainly the National Party and many of its deposed colleagues. It is my hope that the new body, the Crime and Misconduct Commission, will move ahead in Queensland with multiparty support to be a significant force in combating crime and corruption in this state.
