



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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INTEGRITY BILL AND COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY (CORRUPTION, CRONYISM AND UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR) AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (12.52 pm): I am delighted to be able to speak in support of the Integrity Bill 2009 but more particularly to oppose this disgraceful legislative measure that the opposition seeks to move through the parliament, disgracefully entitled the Commissions of Inquiry (Corruption, Cronyism and Unethical Behaviour) Amendment Bill 2009.

If we look at the private member's bill introduced by the member for Surfers Paradise, we do not see a policy framework. It is not about accountability and integrity; it is a cheap political stunt which uses the parliament in this state in a cynical ploy for political point scoring. That is what we have come to expect from the Leader of the Opposition. This is the second legislative measure that the Leader of the Opposition has brought into the House. Do members remember the first one? The first one was the disgraceful 'integrity' bill that he tried to put through the House amending the Criminal Code about misleading parliamentary committees. There was nothing new in that. Two times it had been through the parliament, and this was the very best the Leader of the Opposition could do in his first run out on to the paddock as Leader of the Opposition—a bill that he photocopied from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Bligh: And wasn't that successful!

Mr DICK: Perhaps it assisted the recycling industry in Queensland. Apart from that, it made no contribution to public policy and debate in the state. Again, we have this measure coming through the parliament—a bill that has little respect for the parliament, a bill that seeks to direct me as the Attorney-General to refer a matter to the Governor in Council. Again, the opposition has form with what it seeks to do. Do members remember a few weeks ago when the opposition came into this House seeking to direct the Director of Public Prosecutions in respect of a purported prosecution in Queensland? Those opposite came into this House with a motion that provided that if the Director of Public Prosecutions did not take a particular course of action then he would have to produce his file to a parliamentary committee for examination. That is their respect for integrity and accountability in Queensland—a motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition and supported by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, someone who purports to be the shadow Attorney-General in this state. They moved a motion in this House that directed the independent prosecuting authority in this state to produce a brief of evidence to the parliament if a particular course of action was not taken and an individual was not prosecuted.

If members opposite had their way, they would stand there and seek to monster individuals: 'You act in a certain way or we will have your documents. You will appear before the parliament.' No doubt they will seek to reintroduce their legislation—their so-called amendments to the Criminal Code about lying in parliament—if they ever obtain the Treasury benches again so that they could use the parliament to pressure people to mislead the parliament so that they could be prosecuted. These are the sorts of people who have no understanding of the rule of law in our state. They cannot find a lawyer to be the shadow Attorney-General. That is how base the LNP has become. Those opposite cannot find someone with legal qualifications to stand up as the alternative first law officer of this state, and they presume to come into this

House and lecture to us about the legal system, about the rule of law, about integrity and accountability. Members opposite have little capacity for self-reflection and for learning from the mistakes of the past.

Let us look at the last time they set up a commission of inquiry. Do members remember that effort? Do members remember the partisan efforts—

Mr Hoolihan: Connolly-Ryan.

Mr DICK: That is right. I take the interjection from the member for Keppel. The Connolly-Ryan royal commission. Wasn't that upholding integrity and accountability! Wasn't that upholding the rule of law! We do not see those opposite supporting any substantial measure that will improve integrity and accountability in this state. So what did they do when they set up that commission of inquiry? They ended up with egg all over their faces. That commission of inquiry was discredited and shut down by the Supreme Court because of ostensible bias! What did the former Liberal member for Kurilpa say, their hand-picked royal commissioner, Peter Connolly? He said, 'Now that our side of politics is back in power we can do a proper critique of the Fitzgerald experiment.' That is what Mr Connolly called it—an experiment. And that is all they have ever regarded it as—an experiment.

They have never faced the truth of the past. We have the shadow Attorney-General decrying and declaiming the prosecution of former National Party ministers who went to jail 20 years ago. One would have thought that they would have some ability to reconcile the past 20 years later, but they have not and they have no intention of ever acknowledging the errors of the past. Rather, they hold up those individuals as their mentors, as their guiding lights. They are their light on the hill—people like Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, a former Premier of the state, who accepted a brown paper bag full of money coming into his office and avoided conviction before a jury of his peers in this state by an individual who was a member of the National Party. They have a history of partisan political commissions of inquiry that do not seek to ascertain the truth but are engaged solely in political point scoring and the political pursuit of others, and this bill is no exception.

We noted in the debate on their bill to amend the Criminal Code the comments by the former shadow Attorney-General, the member for Caloundra, when he said that he would be coming after those members on this side of the House when that bill was introduced into the parliament. That was another example of them seeking to monster and pursue individuals. As we have seen consistently since the member for Surfers Paradise has taken office as the Leader of the Opposition, there has been no rigorous policy development in this House. They have no respect for the parliament and the democratic processes it represents. Why do we know that? Let us go back and look at their first effort. Remember their blueprint on integrity and accountability? We know what happened when the Leader of the Opposition tried to table it and was unsuccessful in tabling a document in the parliament. We do not hear much about that now. We do not hear about their first effort. We do not hear about their initial effort to clean up Queensland.

Let us look at that 'blueprint' written by the fraternity boys on level 6—the frat boys on level 6. They thought it was funny to do a mock-up, to mock the government's green paper. That was their first contribution. As difficult as it was to read—the puerile drivel that the opposition put forward as public policy—I went back to have a look at it and it contains many interesting things. One of the things they talk about is how the boundaries for the electorates in Queensland should be drawn. They say that nowhere in our green paper was there any description about the boundaries in Queensland, how elections should be run or how the boundaries should be drawn.

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (2.40 pm): I return to the so-called blueprint that the opposition attempted to table in September 2009. It is 12 pages of drivel charading and masquerading as public policy. On page 8 of that document it is interesting to read that the opposition raises questions about how elections should be run in Queensland and the boundaries drawn. It is an explicit statement, made in the opposition's blueprint, that questions how electoral boundaries should be drawn in Queensland, and that should come as no surprise.

Ms Bligh: And we know what that's code for.

Mr DICK: Exactly. It is more than code. I take the interjection from the Premier. It is a direct comment on the electoral boundaries in our state, because we know that those opposite have form when it comes to rigging boundaries in Queensland. They took the concept of a gerrymander and the concept of malapportionment to its zenith. They refined it.

In a little over a week's time those on this side of the House will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Goss government coming to power which changed Queensland forever. It should not be forgotten the boundaries we had in our state for that election on 2 December 1989. In the election of 1989 we only need to look at the seats of then Premier Russell Cooper and then opposition leader Wayne Goss. What were the enrolments in those seats 20 years ago? The number of electors on the roll for the then Premier's seat

of Roma were 8,221. In the seat of Salisbury, the seat of the then opposition leader, Wayne Goss, the number of voters on the roll were 29,192. The voters in Roma had 3½ times the electoral power of those on the south side of Brisbane very close to where I grew up and the seat that I now represent.

Those opposite have the temerity to come into this House and table a document which questions the boundaries that form the basis of the conduct of elections in this state. They go on further at page 8 of the blueprint to ask, 'Should there be an independent assessment of the basic assumptions which shape the present electoral outcomes?' This is a document endorsed by the shadow cabinet and endorsed by all members opposite.

There is one assumption that underpins free and democratic elections in Queensland, and that is the principle of one vote, one value. I ask the Leader of the Opposition and those members opposite: what part of the words 'one vote, one value' do they not understand? There is only one reason they would raise that issue in a document purporting to be public policy, and that is if they thought to change it—that is, if they were considering changing the electoral system and the 'basic assumptions', not my words but those of the members opposite, and the nature of boundaries for electorates in Queensland. They do not talk about that very much. That has gone off their radar, but that is not surprising because they change their position on so many things every day depending on the political whims and political advantage they think they can gain over the government. There is no consistency in anything they do.

Members opposite may have short memories and may be reluctant to learn from the past. In their view, the world began when Labor won government. Look at the terms of reference. They go back to 1998. This is an indication of how partisan they are. Why would they stop at 1998? Why not go back and look at the last time they were in government? Because they would be embarrassed and ashamed about how they approached public policy in this state, including the biased royal commission they established.

Mr Wilson: They have not got over the 1989 election.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection. They have not got over the loss in 1989 and for 20 years have struggled to form a coherent public policy base in this state.

As Edmund Burke said, 'Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.' That is the curse of the Liberal National Party. Members on this side of the House will not forget it, we will not let them forget it and we will not let Queensland forget it.

Let us look at what a former trustee of the National Party once said about procurement and contracts under the National Party. What did Sir Rogerick Proctor say? He said that there was a genuine concern in the business community about the extent of cronyism when the National Party was in government. He said that tenders had been called 'when it was fairly obvious this was only a charade and that it had already been decided who was going to be granted the contract'. That was corruption and cronyism at its worse. The bill demonstrates no knowledge and acknowledgement of the past.

I do feel compelled to comment on many aspects of the bill. There are so many flaws in the opposition bill that it is embarrassing. One thing that I want to comment on is the method of appointment that those opposite are suggesting this parliament should endorse. Proposed subsection 35(2) of the act, as set out in clause 3 of the bill, outlines the requirements of the person who is to constitute their supposed commission of inquiry. Proposed subsection 35(3) provides an alternate option if the Attorney-General cannot locate—I am not quite sure what 'locate' is meant to mean; perhaps 'identify' would be a better term—a person as outlined in proposed subsection 35(2). It requires the Attorney-General to ask the Bar Association of Queensland to nominate a member of that association who is a barrister of the Supreme Court of at least five years standing. That is a provision that is mandatory. The Attorney-General must do that. That person is then to constitute the commission of inquiry.

I ask the Leader of the Opposition: what sort of consultation was engaged in with the Bar Association of Queensland to put a peak legal body in the invidious and partisan position of having to choose someone to constitute a commission of inquiry? I would be grateful to know when the Bar Association was consulted on this and what it said when it was consulted. I note that there is nothing in the explanatory notes that refers to consultation. I would be very interested in that response. I would be most surprised if a peak legal body in this state would be interested and involve itself in what is a highly partisan approach being taken by those members opposite.

But those opposite have no respect for those processes. They have little respect for this parliament. They would not even know how to spell 'fundamental legislative principles'. In fact, they do not, because they had to circulate an erratum to their explanatory notes because they had incorrectly spelt 'fundamental legislative principles'! That is the sort of opposition we have in this state. Members opposite come in here lecturing on high to all of us about integrity and accountability yet they cannot get the most fundamental spelling correct.

This state deserves a robust policy on how we as a parliament of elected representatives can better serve the people of Queensland, how we can improve accountability mechanisms and how we can ensure

that our system is robust and world class. But that is not what the opposition would give the people of Queensland.

There is no high-level debate in what those opposite propose. There is no well-considered policy in what they seek to do. This is rank and base political game playing. We are a growing state, expanding to reflect the government's focus on modernisation and reform, to keep Queensland a progressive state. Public policy in this state needs to look to the future, to be ambitious, to learn from the mistakes of the past and to provide solutions, reforms and policy direction. That is what the people of Queensland deserve. We on this side of the House follow the path of reform that will again set new benchmarks in integrity and accountability. There are a range of measures—courageous measures—in the accountability bill that the Premier has before the parliament that will again change Queensland forever.

The Premier has clearly set out, with demonstrated leadership, the agenda for the government in this 53rd Parliament in a range of reforms related to the functions and integrity system of our state, including the functions and independence of the Integrity Commissioner. The importance of the Integrity Commissioner will be enshrined in legislation. The Integrity Commissioner will be an office holder of this parliament. The Integrity Commissioner will report to a parliamentary committee rather than to the Premier.

In the past few months I have had the privilege of travelling around Queensland with other round table members speaking and, most importantly, listening at integrity forums. The Premier and I also participated in two online forums. I commend the Premier for the people's question time that this government will implement. That is a way for Queenslanders to have direct access to politicians, to put questions to politicians.

I note that during one of the online forums we had an email from 'Scott' of 'Indooroopilly' asking if we would hold a community cabinet in the western suburbs of Brisbane. Perhaps it is a coincidence. We have resolved to hold a community cabinet this weekend at Forest Lake in the western suburbs and I encourage 'Scott' of 'Indooroopilly', whomever he might be, to come to that forum to see the Queensland cabinet in action in the community with ministers and directors-general—the most senior leaders in this state—listening to people in the western suburbs of this city about their concerns, and trying to respond to those genuine issues of concern.

One of the most important elements of the bill is the development of a legislative framework for regulating the lobbying industry. Significant reform is being proposed by this government. We will establish a register making it totally independent of the government of the day. Also integral to the bill is the ban on lobbyists receiving a success fee for achieving a favourable outcome from the government—something that the Premier was strong on from day one. She came out and said that we would reform the law in this state. We are still waiting to hear what the opposition will do on so many things—on the register of lobbyists, on successful fees, on the \$20,000 a plate dinner. That is the most simple question possible to be answered—

Ms Bligh: And we still don't know after the shadow minister's contribution. We still don't know if they're supporting the bill.

Mr DICK: We are still waiting. With so many things the members opposite come into this House and speak from both sides of their mouth. On one side they criticise the bill but, when push comes to shove, they say that they will not vote against it. We do not know what they will do just as we do not know what they will do on so many legislative measures that are currently before the parliament. But they will be put to the test today on this bill as they will be put to the test later in the week.

I stand behind the Premier on this very significant process to reform integrity and accountability in Queensland. The Integrity Bill 2009 is a very significant bill. As I have said earlier, it will change Queensland for the better and continue the modernisation and reform process that the Australian Labor Party, when in government in this state, has always stood for. I commend the Premier and commend the bill to the House.