



Speech by

## Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Wednesday, 7 October 2009

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### CRIMINAL CODE (HONESTY AND INTEGRITY IN PARLIAMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

**Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (8.54 pm): Do not mention the 'lie' word, the Attorney-General, Cameron Dick, said before. Talk about 'weaselese' and 'legalese'. It does not matter how the Attorney-General tries to contort the issue to suit his party line, this issue is about lying, and Labor's discomfort at being held to a higher standard about that fact is all too clear. The Attorney-General's contribution earlier where he rejected the state opposition's bill before the House is damning. This bill seeks to restore the provision which makes it illegal to lie to parliament—that is, deliberately misleading this parliament with false evidence. We are debating it now because of the stain on the history of this parliament when in 2005 a Labor government recalled the parliament to absolve a Labor minister, Gordon Nuttall, who faced the charge of misleading this House. Then the Labor government went further and struck those provisions from the Criminal Code the following year so no-one could be charged with knowingly misleading the House.

This provision was originally drafted by Sir Samuel Griffith—free from the political connivance that we saw with the Gordon Nuttall affair—with the consideration that parliament required the pursuit of the highest standards of probity and needed these standards embedded in the Criminal Code. What makes me so angry about Labor's dogged refusal to restore the anti-lying provision in the Criminal Code is that we all lose because of this abuse in the parliament and how it was removed. All members of parliament—past, present and future, Independent or party aligned—are maligned by the way the Criminal Code was changed by a Labor majority government and the substance of that change.

Labor members opposite may laugh it off and feign boredom about debating the issue of honesty and integrity, but we should never forget our anger and the anger of Queenslanders. We should never be silent or cease to seek the restoration of standards, and that has to be reflected with laws such as those presented here tonight by the Leader of the Opposition. However, this is a convenient denial of history by Labor as well as a denial of truth. Let us examine that history—an embarrassing history—as to the comments made by prominent Labor ministers in defending the member for Sandgate, Gordon Nuttall, who sparked this extraordinary abuse of executive power in 2005-06. Let us look at the comments of Anna Bligh, the then deputy premier and now Premier of Queensland. She said—

For those of us who are colleagues of the member for Sandgate, for those of us who have worked with him, for those of us who have sat with him around a cabinet table and know him to be a decent man—a man of integrity—this will not be easy.

She thought he was a man of integrity. Former minister Warren Pitt also attested to the good character of the member for Sandgate by saying, '... a character which those opposite sought to tarnish'. The now Deputy Premier, Paul Lucas, said, 'I know the member for Sandgate well and I believe that he is a good and honest man.' There was a whole line-up of these guys ready to beatify Gordon Nuttall. Then Labor minister Tom Barton said—

... I want to express my beliefs on the honesty of a member, the member for Sandgate, whom I have known for almost 30 years.

He went on in extraordinary detail about what he believed. But the contribution from Labor MP Gary Fenlon was really quite extraordinary. He said—

... the member for Sandgate is one of the greatest members who has ever entered this parliament.

The beatification of Gordon Nuttall under then Premier Beattie and then Deputy Premier Anna Bligh was foolish then, and the changes it brought upon the Criminal Code are still foolish today. But the loopy, loony arguments put forward by Labor to distract from the core issue of dishonesty continue.

Sadly, I have just heard the member for Murrumba give an extraordinary contribution about why we cannot trust the state's judges—

**Mr Nicholls:** The psycho legal babble.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I take that interjection. It was extraordinary to hear a Labor member of this parliament say that we cannot trust the state's judges to determine matters of lying as he believes they are not trustworthy or capable of such a feat, though other citizens are judged by them in regard to matters of veracity all the time.

**Mr WELLS:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The assertion the honourable member is making that I said such a thing is untrue, offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Wendt): Order! The member has asked for that to be withdrawn unreservedly.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I withdraw. I will say that the member for Murrumba's arguments are loopy and loony and the *Hansard* record will attest to what he thinks of the state's judges.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Absolutely. Perhaps it is time that the people were asked what they think.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Members, I am finding it difficult to hear. I know that other members are finding it difficult to hear. The member for Maroochydore has the call.

**Mr Watt** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Everton!

**Ms SIMPSON:** Perhaps it is time to ask the people of Queensland what they think and whether this provision should be restored. They have certainly been telling us, the state opposition, what they think about this government with regard to its lack of honesty. The people of Queensland were blatantly misled before the election about what this Labor government intended to do, be it in terms of the sale of assets around the state that belonged to the people of Queensland, be it the state's tax rebate on petrol and so many other issues.

I believe that if the people of Queensland were asked whether it should be illegal for parliamentarians to lie to this parliament and whether this provision should be restored to the Criminal Code they would in fact say yes, it should be. That is the trust that we have taken forward by incorporating that into the bill tonight. We believe it is essential that the stain that was brought upon this parliament is finally removed and that this provision is finally restored to the Criminal Code the way that our founding father Sir Samuel Griffith intended it to be back in the 1800s.