



Speech by

**Jarrod Bleijie**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

Hansard Tuesday, 4 August 2009

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## **CRIMINAL CODE AND OTHER LEGISLATION (MISCONDUCT, BREACHES OF DISCIPLINE AND PUBLIC SECTOR ETHICS) AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (4.56 pm): I rise to speak to the Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Misconduct, Breaches of Discipline and Public Sector Ethics) Amendment Bill 2009. It is no surprise that this bill is before the parliament today. The government obviously woke up this morning, read the newspaper and reacted. The government needs to get real and not try to be seen as a government that deals with issues of an ethical nature when it wants to but to be a proactive government that actually does deal with these issues.

I said in this place some time ago that this government is a reactive government. We have seen this time and time again—be it the water crisis, the child crisis or the electricity crisis. Now we have the ethical issues and corruption crisis and the Premier comes out full blazing banning MPs. I'm sorry, friends—too late, too sad. The Queensland public has caught them out. This is a desperate attempt by a government to appear to be doing something to give the people of Queensland some confidence in the integrity of government dealings. Unfortunately for the people of Queensland, integrity and public sector ethics are just some of the many things that this government and the Labor Party seem to lack.

The criminal code and other legislation bill has been drafted to extend the existing disciplinary actions that can be taken against those people in public office. This bill has come about as a result of submissions made by the Crime and Misconduct Commission in relation to Public Service misconduct. This bill also seeks to implement the CMC recommendations to introduce an offence of misconduct in a public office and to extend the existing operation of misconduct to those public servants who try to avoid any punishment by resigning from their position in public office.

I might add that the LNP has previously requested that the scope of official misconduct be extended as a result of scandals in this government which the Leader of the Opposition has already addressed today. It is about time that this government practised what it preaches in relation to misconduct and integrity, especially in relation to conflicts of interest. It is about time that this government be accountable to the people of Queensland and for once allow the people of Queensland to have the confidence in the integrity of the government. But, like I said before, integrity and public sector ethics are things that this government just does not have.

This is yet another example of how this government is constantly reactive to the situations rather than being proactive and leading the way with regard to public sector integrity, just like this government is reactive in terms of government dealings with businesses and lobby groups in Queensland. If this government actually dealt with these issues in a transparent and efficient manner then perhaps the people of Queensland would have reason to be confident in their government. The opposition has continued to advocate for reform of government bureaucracy and accountability, as outlined by the member for Southern Downs during the recent March election campaign.

The bill that is before the parliament today will allow the Premier to seek advice from the Integrity Commissioner in relation to conflicts of interest regarding any member of the Legislative Assembly, including those members of the opposition. All members of this parliament should be above reproach, and the people of Queensland should be able to have full confidence in their state representatives. Unfortunately, that is not the case, and corruption runs to the core of this government and the Australian Labor Party. This amendment will give an opportunity to this government to abuse the role of the Integrity Commissioner for cheap political purposes.

**Mr DICK:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The honourable member knows very well that an amendment has been circulated in my name to address that issue. He is deliberately misrepresenting the amendments before the House and he should withdraw his comments. Can I also add that his comments about political manipulation of the Integrity Commissioner are deeply offensive and he should withdraw them.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the member to withdraw.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I withdraw, Madam Deputy Speaker. As Wayne Goss commented on ABC's AM program on 1 August 2009, 'I think the longer any side of politics is in power the more risk there is the cobwebs will settle.' That is not a criticism of Peter Beattie. It can happen with either side of politics. The member for Nicklin today also agreed that this can happen on both sides of politics.

The bill has now come about after the scathing indictment of Queensland Labor governments by Tony Fitzgerald last week. Mr Fitzgerald commented that after 12 years of Labor government this state is run by mates for mates. Queenslanders were right to share the concerns of the former Integrity Commissioner, Gary Crooke, and CMC commissioner, Robert Needham, that something is seriously wrong with the way this government operates the levels of bureaucracy.

Before the election in March this year the Premier rushed through legislation trying to catch out business donations to the LNP. How appropriate that the Labor Party was caught out by not declaring a \$225,000 donation from one of its union contributors. This just shows the extent to which Labor will ignore the legislation that it crafts and subsequently introduces. If it is found that the Labor Party should be fined, then it should be fined according to the letter of the law that was introduced by its own government. This is yet another example of how Anna Bligh and Labor will say one thing in parliament and then do the opposite during an election campaign. Is this legislation just another example of how Labor does not play the game by the rules which it set? This government needs to recommend that a royal commission be established for the purposes of looking into these matters instead of trying to hide behind the fallacies and misguided protection offered by the Integrity Commissioner.

This government is only now seeking to introduce this bill which will amend existing legislation as recommended by the CMC as a result of its investigations way back in 2000 and 2007. I am afraid this is a case of closing the gate well and truly after the horse has bolted. The recommendations made by the CMC should have been acted upon by the government at the time that they were made, not now when a royal commission should be called.

Again, we have heard lots this week in relation to corruption, integrity and ethical standards of the government, and we continually keep reading some things of interest of late. I note an article in the *Australian*: 'The Premier defends minister over business links'. Claims that infrastructure minister and planning minister Stirling Hinchliffe and local government minister Desley Boyle kept a 2005 meeting about a Sunshine Coast development secret have emerged. Treasurer Andrew Fraser then came out on Monday morning in defence of Mike Kaiser, the Premier's Chief of Staff, who is linked to the same development called Rainbow Shores. I say to the Treasurer and the government that they should heed my warning. Perhaps they should slow down on giving character references to ministers and members of their government, as we can clearly see what happens, as in the Nuttall case, which was outlined in question time today.

It gets interesting—and this is why we need a royal commission in Queensland—when we only have to pick up a week of newspapers and read the headlines. I submit to the House that if this is not cause for a royal commission then I do not know what is. 'Key Bligh man part of \$1.5 billion resort bid'.

**Mr Reeves** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** They do not want to hear this, Madam Deputy Speaker. 'Cronies and allegations put pressure on Bligh'; 'Anger over claims of secret Labor deals'; 'A sad state of ethics'; 'Dirty dozen: Fitzgerald savages Labor's 12 years'; 'Bligh rejects Fitzgerald warning'; 'Labor admits donations breach'; 'Culture allowed Nuttall to thrive'; 'Why Nuttall may bring Bligh down'; 'Guilty: Shock Nuttall lock-up after jury's damning verdict'; 'Clean up your act'. If that is not a good example of why we need a royal commission in Queensland, then I do not know what is.