



Speech by

Mandy Johnstone

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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

Ms JOHNSTONE (Townsville—ALP) (4.46 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the cognate debate on the Integrity Bill and the Commissions of Inquiry (Corruption, Cronyism and Unethical Behaviour) Amendment Bill. In a successful democratic society, the public need to have faith in the integrity of their elected officials. This is a reasonable expectation in a modern society. The changes proposed in the government's Integrity Bill are a recognition that changes are needed to ensure Queenslanders have faith in the transparency and accountability of their current and future governments.

The Bligh Labor government acknowledged the changing expectations of the Queensland public with the release of the discussion paper in August this year. I attended the session held in Townsville at which the Attorney-General listened to the open and frank comments from our local community about their expectations of elected members. As we would expect, the opinions expressed were varied. Topics raised locally in Townsville included discussions about lobbyists, transparency of roles with politicians and public servants, the length of parliamentary terms and campaign spending, just to name a few.

The opposition would have us believe that Queensland is still stuck in the old National Party days of the 1970s and 1980s. This is simply not the case. Queensland already has some of the most stringent accountability measures of any state in Australia including an independent anticorruption body in the CMC, the Integrity Commissioner, a register of lobbyists, whistleblower protection legislation, reformed freedom of information laws, restrictions on postseparation employment, and bans on direct holding of shares by ministers and parliamentary secretaries. The Integrity Bill takes these measures further, and there are a couple of points I would like to make.

Clause 69 of the Integrity Bill deals with the payment of success fees. While payment of success fees can be a suitable form of remuneration for other types of employment, I do not think this is appropriate for lobbyists. This type of payment could infer that the skills and contacts of the lobbyists are more important than the quality of the project or matter under consideration. Central to the government's bill is the strengthening of the powers of the Integrity Commissioner and their relocation from the Public Sector Ethics Act to this new Integrity Bill. Making the commissioner answerable to the parliament is certainly giving this role more teeth, and I support this move.

Additionally, making the services of the Integrity Commissioner available to all members of parliament is another tool which will assist members to avoid any potential problem areas or concerns. In fact, I met with Dr Solomon last fortnight to ensure that my personal affairs were in order and that I understood his role and how I can use the Office of the Integrity Commissioner to ensure my personal affairs do not interfere with my ability to represent the people of my electorate fairly in the parliament. I intend to oppose the opposition's bill and support the government's bill, which I commend to the House.