



Speech by

Peter Dowling

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

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

Mr DOWLING (Redlands—LNP) (2.30 pm): I rise to speak to the Integrity Bill 2009 and the Commissions of Inquiry (Corruption, Cronyism and Unethical Behaviour) Amendment Bill 2009 in this cognate debate. I will keep my comments brief. I thought I would look in the dictionary to find the meaning of the word 'integrity'—not that I did not know what the word meant; I just thought it was important to get back to tintsacks. The *Macquarie Budget Dictionary 3rd Edition 1993*—an old dictionary that I had at home—states that 'integrity' means 'Soundness of moral principle and character; uprightness, honesty, sound, unimpaired or perfect condition.' The *Concise English Dictionary New Edition 1998* states that 'integrity' means, 'Honesty, sincerity, completeness, wholeness, an unimpaired condition.' I undertook a Bing search of the word 'integrity' and found the word to mean, 'Adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honest, the state of being whole, entire, or undiminished: to preserve the integrity of the empire, sound, unimpaired, or perfect condition.' It is interesting to note that, throughout the years—from 1993 to 2009—and I am sure right back to the origins of time, the meaning of 'integrity' has not changed.

Integrity is a word that has tremendous power and tremendous value in any community, but it is a word that appears to have lost some of its currency in this place. The community has lost its faith in the government. The community has lost faith in the government because of its inability to be honest, especially with the people for whom it alleges to represent. The government lost that faith at a time when it was so vital to be honest—at election time.

The 2009 election campaign began with an untrue statement. That statement was, 'I will go full term.' Who said that? That is right; the honourable the Premier said that. Then a few days later the election was called—six months early. At election time we put forward a platform. We put forward a budget, we put forward all of the issues on which we want to lead our state forward. At that point in time there was a great opportunity. We put all of our plans forward and the community chose Labor—

Mr LANGBROEK: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

(Quorum formed at 2.34 pm)

Mr DOWLING: It is at that time in the electoral process that it is absolutely critical that we map out our future direction in terms of how we are going to govern the state. I suggest to members that the reason we have the Integrity Bill before this House is that when this Labor government went to the community it did not mention the planned asset sales and it did not mention the new fees or the increase in registration, the increase in the cost of electricity, the increase in the cost of water or the introduction of the sustainability declaration. When this government came into office, the very first thing it did was flip the entire state on its head. That is why I suspect we have this Integrity Bill before us. It is all about talking up integrity. It is certainly not about being true to the meaning of the word.

With all of the evidence post election, can we say that this government's integrity is intact? The community says that it is not. The community certainly tells me loud and clear that it does not have faith in this government or its integrity. If the government had mentioned the sale of the railways, the sale of the motorways, the sale of the ports or the sale of the forestry then we could honestly say that the government had won office fairly and squarely—that it had gone to the people and was given a mandate. Instead, the government has dreamt up things such as this Integrity Bill.

This government has been in office for 11 years. It is now pretending to stamp out the very culture that it fostered, the very culture that it has delivered to Queensland, the very thing that this government has entrenched in the Queensland parliament and in government in Queensland. Labor is responsible. It is not just former Premier Beattie who is responsible; current Premier Bligh is also responsible, as is every long-serving member on that side of the House. It is ingrained, it is entrenched, it is the very fabric of the party. It is riddled with cancer. It has been the Labor government of these last 11 years that requires all of these amendments, all of these alleged calls for action and calls to arms to clean up government. The government should clean up its own backyard—the very mess that it made. It has become Labor's DNA.

I draw members' attention to part 2 of the bill titled 'Advice for designated persons on ethics or integrity issues'. Clause 14 states—

This part does not apply in relation to advice for a member of the Legislative Assembly on interests issues.

Clause 15, titled 'Request for advice', states—

A designated person (the **advisee**) may, by written request to the integrity commissioner, ask for the integrity commissioner's advice on an ethics or integrity issue involving the person.

I suggest that an amendment may need to be made to that clause so that the clause states that members of government who are seeking re-election, as part of their campaign commitment, should go to the Integrity Commissioner and ask if mentioning the sale of assets is something that they should do up-front—mentioning the sell-off of rail, the sell-off of the motorways and the sell-off of the ports. Maybe if the members of the government had been up-front and gone to the Integrity Commissioner they might have been told, 'Perhaps, as we are in election mode, you might like to tell the people of Queensland that that is what you have planned for them—an increased cost for water and electricity and increases in registration and extra charges; every single thing that is going through the roof.'

Labor is rapidly becoming the fix-it party. All we keep hearing is, 'I'll fix it, I'll fix it, I'll fix it.' The government would not be so busy trying to cover up and fix things up if it were not so badly broken and so lacking in integrity. My colleagues have covered most of the issues in great detail. I will wind up my comments by reminding members of what I said back on 22 April 2009 in my maiden speech. These comments relate to the electoral system in Queensland.

Mr Watt: I just can't remember it.

Mr DOWLING: I will refresh the member's memory. I thank him for his interjection. I stated—

Another issue has been raised by Redlands residents who watched with interest the recent election and the system of voting, wanting to understand how it works. Members of this House should be concerned that there is no need for proof of identity—

And other members have touched on this—

when a person presents themselves at a polling station, other than your name and address.

That is why we are calling for electoral reform as part of a commission of inquiry into corruption, cronyism and unethical behaviour. Electoral reform goes right to the heart of the issue. I stated further—

It has also been brought to my attention that it is more difficult to rent a video movie.

In Queensland, it is more difficult to hire a \$5 movie than it is to prove who you are to take part in the electoral process, which is the cornerstone of our democracy, and to have a say in the future of Queensland. To my way of thinking, that has the potential to completely undermine our democratic process and our democratic system. It should sound alarm bells in a civilised, modern society. We need to ensure that our electoral process is robust and beyond reproach.

The reform that we are calling for in the honourable the opposition leader's private member's bill, the Commissions of Inquiry (Corruption, Cronyism and Unethical Behaviour) Amendment Bill 2009, will get right to the heart of those issues. We need to ensure that our electoral system is robust and it is not a case of simply turning up somewhere to have your name ticked off the roll. It needs to be much more than that. I thank the Leader of the Opposition, John-Paul Langbroek, for bringing forward this private member's bill. I ask those opposite to see wisdom and merit in this bill and to support it as we will be supporting the Integrity Bill.