



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Wednesday, 27 October 2010

VOTING SYSTEM

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (5.49 pm): I speak in favour of the amendment moved by the Premier. There is a significant issue falling out of the last federal election and it relates to informal voting in Queensland. What happened in the last federal election? The number of informal votes increased by 50 per cent in Queensland—from 3.56 per cent in 2007 to 5.63 per cent in 2010. This issue was drawn to the attention of the Queensland community by the Australian Electoral Commission the day after the election when the spokesperson for the Australian Electoral Commission raised the concern about the level of informal voting in the media. A few days later, on 28 August, Mr Phil Diak from the Australian Electoral Commission raised concerns about the number of informal votes cast in Queensland by people who did not realise they had to number every box. What we are seeing here is confusion caused by two systems of voting. The two states that have optional preferential voting—Queensland and New South Wales—were the two states with the highest informal vote in the nation. It is not fair for people to unintentionally vote informally and not have a say in democracy. The Premier has said, 'We will look at this. We will consider this significant issue, as any responsible government should, to ensure our citizens have a full say in democracy.' We want to see the basis of this problem, the cause of the problem, and ensure that every person in this state has a say and that their voice is heard at the ballot box. That is the Labor tradition.

Let us look at some of the arrant and rank hypocrisy we have seen from those members opposite tonight. What have we seen over the past 20 years? On 19 May 1992, when the debate on the Electoral Bill was had in this very chamber, what did the Liberal Party say then? What did Santo Santoro, the political godfather and mentor of many of those members opposite, say? He said—

Our electoral system should be either all voluntary or all compulsory. The Bill takes a two-bob-each-way approach and comes up with a most unsatisfactory result.

That is, optional preferential voting that they all seek to support tonight. He continued—

The overall result of this move will be great confusion—

which we saw demonstrated at the last federal election—

for those counting ballots and those acting as scrutineers.

On 26 July 1996 the *Courier-Mail* reported that the National Party at a state conference wanted to return to compulsory preferential voting. On 27 May 1997 the *Courier-Mail* reported that the member for Gladstone would back the push of the then Treasurer, Joan Sheldon—a Liberal Party member—to abolish optional preferential voting. On 10 October 1998 the *Courier-Mail* reported that the Liberal Party state president, Bob Carroll, said that optional preferential voting was confusing and should be scrapped. He was supported by Rob Borbidge, who was the opposition leader by that stage.

Did the views change in the 21st century? No. What happened on 17 December 2001? The member for Toowoomba South referred to optional preferential voting as the 'just vote 1 trick that Premier Beattie introduced'. Who is tricky now? Two years later, what did the member for Toowoomba South—who was then Leader of the Opposition—say? He said, 'Under optional preferential voting and the ploy of just vote 1, it's an impossibility to win a three-cornered contest in almost every circumstance against the Labor

Party.' Who is pushing the ploy now? Then of course we had it all laid out by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition on 5 August 2005 when he said that optional preferential voting was 'terribly unfair' and that 'we need to look at moving back towards compulsory preferential voting because I think it gives the best outcome'.

What hypocrisy we are seeing tonight, slathered on by those members opposite—optional preferential voting, the cornerstone of democracy. They will change their position on any issue in Queensland—law and order, the economy, natural resources—to suit their political purposes. This is yet another example of changing their position to suit themselves. What is worse is what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is reported as saying in the *Ayr Advocate* on 29 September 2007. The paper stated, 'Mr Springborg said there was now a one vote, one value gerrymander in Queensland.' What a disgraceful comment by the member for Southern Downs. Not only do they want to change the electoral system; they want to get rid of one vote, one value to go back to a gerrymander. How dare he put that on the public record in Queensland!

There is only one party that stands for one vote, one value—well, there were two once. The Liberal Party once stood for one vote, one value, but it has now folded and crumbled at the pressure of the National Party, demonstrated by the member for Indooroopilly tonight. We stand for one vote, one value. We stand for open democracy in this state. That is why I support the amendment, and that is why those members opposite should be condemned for their hypocrisy in this debate.