




Speech by

Jarrold Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard Wednesday, 11 May 2011

**ELECTORAL REFORM AND ACCOUNTABILITY AMENDMENT BILL;
ELECTORAL (TRUTH IN ADVERTISING) AMENDMENT BILL;
ELECTORAL REFORM BILL**

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (12.07 pm): Today I contribute to the cognate debate on the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011 introduced by the toxic long-term Labor government, the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill introduced by the can-do Liberal National Party opposition and the Electoral Reform Bill introduced by the member for Beaudesert. For ease of reference, I will address each bill separately, commencing with the Labor government's bill, which essentially asks the people of Queensland to bail the Labor Party out of its financial troubles.

It is abhorrent to think that, just coming out of some of the worst natural disasters in Queensland's history, with people being denied access to funds to rebuild their lives, with 70 per cent of the Premier's own flood support fund not being spent, with people right across Queensland living in tents and couch surfing after losing everything they hold dear, with thousands of Queenslanders on long medical and dental waiting lists, with pensioners finding it difficult to pay exorbitant water fees, today the Labor Party seeks to rely on those people's hard earned money to pay for its political campaigns and to use those funds to replace things such as the photocopier and the espresso coffee machine in the lavish Labor Party headquarters in Peel Street, South Brisbane. As we head into the next state election, the Labor Party seeks easy access to cash and easy access to Queensland taxpayer funds, yet every day flood affected victims are fighting with the government and insurance companies for a few thousand dollars.

The LNP will stick up for Queenslanders. We will stick up for Queensland taxpayers and residents and we will not be supporting this bill. The haste with which this has landed before us is incredible, but it is not surprising for Labor and the comrades sitting here today. This bill was introduced in the last sitting of parliament. It is being debated, conveniently, the day after the federal budget and the day before corrupt former Labor minister Gordon Nuttall will appear in this House.

As we have heard in this House today, some of the Labor Party members who are still members of this parliament were so complimentary of Gordon Nuttall's character back then. This bill is of major importance to the various political parties, candidates and Independent members of this House. It is interesting to note that, by rushing this bill through this week, importantly, it will miss out on the new committee process measures, which are also being debated this week. Honourable members must ask themselves: are they surprised? Not at all! The Labor Party will always do what is in the best interests of the Labor Party and not the average Queenslanders. It verges on corruption—absolute corruption.

The Premier and the Deputy Premier are continually at pains to point out that the Labor Party has integrity and that their measures introduce accountability and transparency into the system. The rushing through of this important bill combined with two other bills before the House is a slap in the face of the moral high ground claimed by the Labor Party. At any sniff of conflict in this place the Deputy Premier holds and waves the Fitzgerald report around, and no doubt he has a copy of it with him today. Sometime during

my presentation he will get up in this place and he will wave the Fitzgerald report around like he does nearly every parliamentary sitting.

Today I have the Shepherdson inquiry report and I am happy to wave it around in this place. Interestingly, the contents of the Shepherdson inquiry report contains a chapter titled 'Setting the scene'. Listed under it are 'ALP Queensland branch, factions and the alleged ALP "mole" within the Australian Electoral Commission'. Chapter 3 is titled 'The 1996 plebiscite for the state electorate of Townsville'. Chapter 4 is titled 'The 1996 Mundingburra by-election'. Chapter 7 is titled 'The 1986 plebiscite for the state electorate of South Brisbane'. Interestingly, it lists under that chapter 'Evidence of boasting of branch stacking, consensual false enrolments, forgery and the enrolment of Paul Lucas' at page 132, which talks a lot about the address 11 Seventh Avenue, Coorparoo. Chapter 8 lists 'The conduct on behalf of the AWU faction and the response of Michael Kaiser'.

Mr Hoolihan interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Most interestingly, for the member for Keppel—

Mr Hoolihan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! The member for Keppel will cease interjecting.

Mr BLEIJIE: Most interestingly, chapter 10, title 'Comments and general observations', lists time limitation for offences at page 172. Time limitations for offences prevented a few heads from rolling in this Shepherdson inquiry.

The Deputy Premier conveniently overlooks the Shepherdson report. And remember, it cost the Labor Party a sitting Deputy Premier and the parliamentary career of the rising star at the time, Mike Kaiser, both of whom came from the current Deputy Premier's own faction. The Shepherdson report revealed such toxic and corrupt internal workings of the Labor Party and electoral fraud that then Premier Beattie called an election with an incredible request of the people of Queensland. He said to Queenslanders, 'Please vote for me. I am the only one who can clean up the Labor Party's electoral fraud. Vote for me and I will fix it.' So bad was the stench of electoral fraud that the Premier had to disassociate himself from his own party. How can one stand in this place as the Deputy Premier has and claim the high moral ground when there have been so many dark clouds hanging over his head? Unlike the Fitzgerald report, which demonstrated a sad and disappointing period in Queensland's now distant past, the Shepherdson report revealed the Labor Party's electoral fraud and immoral activities that were happening during the life of the current government—

Mr Hoolihan: What did Fitzgerald find?

Mr BLEIJIE:—practically yesterday, I say to the member for Keppel. The current Deputy Premier was sitting at the cabinet table with crooks such as Jim Elder, Gordon Nuttall and Merri Rose. It is sheer arrogance for the Deputy Premier to enter this place nearly every parliamentary sitting and wave the Fitzgerald report around.

The Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011 will significantly amend the Electoral Act 1992 to enact changes proposed to some extent in the Labor government's discussion paper titled *Integrity and accountability in Queensland*. The bill before the House considerably changes the manner in which election campaigns are funded in Queensland and puts an additional burden on the taxpayers of this state. At a time when budgetary pressures are at a premium, the changes proposed in this bill will add in excess of \$26 million of taxpayers' money to the funding of elections and the political process in Queensland—an additional expense that cannot be presently justified and an additional expense that will see constituents right across Queensland in every heart and soul electorate of Labor Party members saying that it is unjustifiable.

If anyone in this place went to the people of Grantham or the people who were ravaged by Cyclone Yasi in North Queensland who are living in their tents or couch surfing and said, 'Hey, we the Labor Party are going to invest over \$26 million so you can fund our political campaigns and processes, our how-to-vote cards and our espresso machine at Peel Street head office,' what would they say? Would they look behind them to the tent in which they are living and the air mattress on the ground on which they sleep and say, 'Yes, I agree that the Labor Party should be spending in excess of \$26 million on campaign purposes when I cannot even get a roof over my head and I cannot get access to the Premier's flood relief appeal.' Surely, members opposite are smart enough to understand that when someone is faced, as those in Grantham, Toowoomba, Brisbane and North Queensland are, with that prospect, it would be incomprehensible to tell them that, through this government's legislation, we are going to pass a bill that will give politicians and political parties over \$26 million a year when all these people want is a roof over their head.

That says a lot about the members opposite. It also says a lot about the members opposite that I think they agree with me. We have one of the most controversial reforms in electoral political fundraising history using public money. Yet out of 52 Labor members of parliament, the speaking list is pretty dull. In fact, I think there are only six members plus a minister out of some 52 Labor Party members on the list.

Labor members continually stand in this place and say, 'We're sticking up for the battlers of Queensland. We're sticking up for the Labor Party heartland, the workers, the working class and the union members.' Those members and those ministers should go into their electorates and say to these people, 'You are just going to fund our political campaign process.'

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Mansfield. The minister interjects and asks if I am going to talk about the bill. In the last 11 minutes I have spoken about public funding of political campaigns. That is what this bill is all about. It is about expenditure, capping political donations, capping political expenditure. Even so, the member for Mansfield will be faced with this himself in a matter of time. As soon as this bill passes and receives assent, we will be in the capped expenditure period. If the minister is not across the bill, I would suggest that he read it today and tonight pretty intently because he will need to know about it fairly quickly.

In August 2009 the Premier released a discussion paper titled *Integrity and accountability in Queensland*, proposing 35 questions around the central theme of improving Queensland's integrity and accountability framework which underpins our system of democracy. The discussion paper raised a number of significant questions including, but not limited to, the comparison of accountability mechanisms in Queensland as opposed to other states around the nation and with the Commonwealth government. In table 1.1 of that discussion paper, Queensland ticked all relevant boxes. Figures included in that discussion paper also refer to the amount of money political parties typically spend on election campaigns. It was suggested that in the 2006 state poll \$14 million was spent by all political parties. Maintaining integrity in political campaign fundraising with a particular emphasis on political donations is of paramount importance. It is also vital to consider the historical context of this bill and the events of recent years which have shaped its formation. The potential for corrupting the system has been exposed in recent years by the deeds of the former member for Sandgate, who was found guilty of corruptly receiving secret commissions whilst serving as a minister of this long-term government.

In October 2000 former Premier Beattie commissioned the Shepherdson inquiry, which I have highlighted today. It was instigated when a member of a branch of the Queensland Labor Party publicly alleged widespread electoral fraud in internal party ballots. The Shepherdson inquiry investigated the falsification of documents concerning several plebiscites for Labor Party candidates in the seats of Townsville in 1996 and South Brisbane in 1986, the council wards of East Brisbane and Morningside, both in 1993, and the by-election in Mundingburra. The inquiry caused the resignation of then member for Woodridge and former ALP secretary Mike Kaiser. The falsification of documents pertaining to the electoral roll also involved a number of other serving Labor members in the Queensland government who were required to give evidence at that inquiry.

The Queensland Labor Party has by no means a clean skin when it comes to improving the integrity and accountability of state elections in this place and yet it has the audacity to come in here on a moral crusade to fundamentally amend the Electoral Act with a focus on election spending, political donations and publicly funded political campaigns. The proposed changes, as originally outlined by the government some 18 months ago, were to be in this place by the start of 2010, and that was of course the integrity and accountability paper—a promise which did not eventuate. As the Deputy Premier stated in his second reading speech, the LNP supports a campaign expenditure cap as it levels the playing field and has the potential of improving the quality of candidates for a state election campaign.

The bill before the House imposes an expenditure cap on individual candidates of \$50,000 for a registered political party and \$75,000 for Independents. There is also an additional expenditure cap for political parties of \$80,000 multiplied by the number of seats being contested in a state-wide campaign. The expenditure cap will commence for the initial period on the day after the date of assent to the bill and end at 6 pm on the polling day for the upcoming general election. So practically following the immediate implementation of this bill and royal assent we will be in the first capped expenditure period, limiting what candidates and political parties can spend for campaign expenditure purposes. After the next general election, the cap period will commence on whichever date is the earliest—either the day that is two years after the polling date of the last election or the day of the issue of the writ for the election—and will end at 6 pm on the polling day of any general election day after the next election. The period of a by-election will commence on the day the writs for a by-election are issued and end on the day of the poll for that specific by-election.

An agent of a registered political party or candidate must ensure that the parties do not incur electoral expenditure that is more than the amount equal to the applicable expenditure cap multiplied by the number of electoral districts for which the party has endorsed candidates for the election. Separate state campaign accounts will also need to be maintained for the purpose of expense accountability and to comply with section 177C, with separation indicated for a political party as a whole, each candidate and a registered third-party interest. Donations to political candidates and parties have also come under particular scrutiny in this bill. I understand the reasoning for the focus on these payments with the emphasis to overcoming any perception of cash for access, but I am also gravely concerned with the rights

of the individuals or companies who wish to donate to individual political candidates or political parties as part of our democratic political process.

For the purposes of the members of this House, a political donation in this bill is referred to as any one of the following: a gift in kind accompanied by a statement that the gift is intended to be used for election campaigns; a disposition of property to a registered political party from another branch or division of that party intended to be used for campaign purposes; a disposition of property to a candidate in an election from a federal or interstate branch or division of a political party intended for campaign purposes; and a gift made to an entity, the recipient, that was used or intended to be used by that recipient as a gift in kind for use in election campaigns. Donations to political parties will be limited to \$5,000 and \$2,000 for individual election candidates per financial year.

The cap on donations is retrospective and will apply from 1 January 2011, although I think one ought to point out that, although the cap is retrospective, the explanatory notes on page 2 state that there is no retrospective obligation placed on the parties in relation to the period prior to assent to the bill. I seek clarification from the Attorney to explain why the donation cap would apply retrospectively but then, having no obligation placed on the cause, what is the point? Third-party donations are also regulated in the bill. Electoral expenditure by third parties during a capped expenditure period will not be allowed to exceed \$500,000 across the state or \$75,000 for an individual electorate. There are also other measures in the bill that relate to election funding and financial disclosure.

In the Deputy Premier's second reading speech, he stated that unions will be subject to these donation caps just like everyone else. I put it to the Deputy Premier that, considering the underlying intent of the bill before the House is to ensure that our electoral system is free from undue influence associated with large political donations, there needs to be significant change to the bill with particular reference to third-party donations and the trade union movement. For the benefit of the House, I point out that those wishing to spend more than \$10,000 may wish to register as a third party for campaign purposes. As stated in the well-documented Parliamentary Library research brief published in May 2011—

The main types of donors to political parties tend to be businesses, gaming operators, service providers, developers and trade unions. 4 It has been observed that unions will tend to provide donations to the Labor Party while individuals might donate to a particular party based on ideological reasoning, although this is more evident in countries such as the USA ...

The bill before the House will ensure that each individual union is able to contribute to the \$500,000 cap a year across Queensland for election campaign purposes.

Make no mistake: the union movement is the principal financial supporter of the Queensland Labor Party and, to ensure that these new laws remain unfair for the Liberal National Party and Independent candidates, trade unions are not defined as associated entities or affiliated with a particular political party. However, for the corporate world and individual world, related companies, as defined in the Corporations Act, get caught under the provisions dealing with associated entities. Accordingly, they are pooled together as one third party and only able to contribute the capped amount of \$500,000. However, each union in Queensland, whether officially or unofficially affiliated with the Labor Party, can each—each—spend the capped amount of \$500,000 across Queensland.

In the six months from the period 1 July 2010 to 31 December 2010, the Queensland branch of the Labor Party received many donations from the trade unions—for instance, the Meat Industry Employees Union, \$3,000 from one branch; the Manufacturing Workers Union, \$22,000 from three different branches; the Australian Services Union, \$36,090 from two different branches; the Australian Workers Union, \$198,000 from four different branches; the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, \$194,607.26 from two different branches; the Finance Sector Union, \$2,500; the Maritime Union of Australia, \$6,500 from four separate branches; the Queensland Council of Unions, \$4,500; the Queensland Services Union, a member of the Australian Services Union, \$12,000 from two different branches.

It also received \$1.2 million from Labor Holdings, which it registered with the Australian Electoral Commission as an associated entity. Associated entities are referred to in the bill as being controlled by one or more registered political parties or operating wholly or to a significant extent for the benefit of one or more registered political parties. The union movement in Australia has myriad state and national divisions and several subbranches and divisions across the state. It is therefore logical and fair to bring all affiliated trade unions in line as one related entity to the Labor Party, thereby capping their spending as one entity.

Government members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: There can be no doubt of affiliation based on historical campaign donations, expenditure, compulsory membership of other organisations and having a large say in the operation of the Labor Party at the state conference. As we have seen in the past, unions certainly have a role in choosing Labor Party leaders and ministers.

Last night in the House the member for Keppel made an adjournment speech on the subject of Labour Day. If any of those opposite who just interjected when I was trying to raise the issue of affiliation think I am wrong—that is, that the unions are not somehow affiliated with the Labor Party—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I draw the member for Brisbane Central's attention to the member for Keppel's comments. He said in his adjournment speech last night—

I draw to their attention the fact that the Labor Party is actually the political arm of the union movement.

Based on that we have a fundamental problem in this House, because gone is the Labor Party as a registered political party. I submit to the House that—based on the member for Keppel's statement and the analogy of how the Labor Party political system works—one could raise the argument that the union movement should be the registered political party and the Labor Party should do the campaigning on behalf of the union movement. That is exactly what the member for Keppel said. He stated—

I draw to their attention the fact that the Labor Party is actually the political arm of the union movement.

In his speech last night the member for Keppel did not talk about individual personal affiliations with unions; he talked about the union movement and about the Labor Party being the political arm of that movement.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: If we are going to call a spade a spade and we are to be fair in terms of electoral law and we are going to spend the money of the constituents of the member for Brisbane Central on her campaign and other members' campaigns then let us be fair and let us say in this House that affiliation should apply to the corporate world, the individual world, the Queensland world and also the union movement.

Accordingly, I will be seeking to balance the campaign donation ledger in Queensland. I give notice that I will be moving certain amendments in the consideration in detail stage of this bill with respect to this issue. More particularly in relation to the affiliation of unions, I am going to look at two issues in the consideration in detail stage.

The first amendment I will move will seek to have affiliated industrial organisations with one or more political parties considered an associated entity and brought under the spending caps and donations caps. Secondly, the final integrity test—the Labor Party integrity test—for this government will be an amendment I will move which seeks to close the unfair loophole which sees trade union officials working for the Labor Party during election campaigns allowed to be included as volunteer labour. My amendment will see all those bused-in union hacks from interstate included as gifts-in-kind and stop the unfair advantage employed by Labor for years.

The amendments will certainly convey what some could describe as the Labor Party integrity test. Like the government's NAPLAN tests, the Attorney-General will have a choice—the choice to show Queenslanders that when he speaks about integrity, when he stands in this place and takes the high moral ground, he means it. He should support our amendments if he means what he says in this place.

The bill also proposes public funding for candidates who participate in state campaigns. As noted in the Deputy Premier's second reading speech, this is proposed as a measure to offset restrictions imposed by the donations cap, which has the potential to infringe implied freedoms of communication as set out in the Constitution of Australia. There is a requirement that candidates must receive at least four per cent of the vote to be eligible to receive funding in this model. But, unlike the old system, the amount a candidate receives will be based on the amount they spend rather than the number of votes they receive. Political parties and Independents will also receive additional funding for administration costs. The amount that political parties will receive for these costs is set out in subdivision 2 of the bill, specifically sections 177EA and 177EB.

The initial period for funding will be retrospectively applied—1 January to 30 June 2011, known as the initial period, and as the financial year for each funding period thereafter. These are split into six-monthly intervals, known as the first funding period and the second funding period, ensuring administration payments by 31 July and 31 January each year. The initial state-wide amount is \$1 million and the amount calculated for each funding period during subsequent financial years is based on a formula— $A \times B \div C$, where A is the electoral district amount of the state-wide amount immediately before 1 July each year, B refers to the consumer price index and C is the consumer price index published for the March quarter in the previous year. The CPI amount referred to will be that published for Brisbane.

In my calculations, the Labor Party will receive \$2 million a year to spend on administration. Perhaps if flood affected Queenslanders are having difficulty filling out claim forms, as nastily claimed by the chairman of the Premier's appeal fund, the Labor Party may assist Queenslanders and provide some of its \$2 million for administration costs and provide assistance to flood affected victims to get their administration burden reduced and get these forms in.

Independent members of parliament are also entitled to receive public funding for administrative costs which the schedule to the bill sets out. I feel the pain for the members for Beaudesert and Burnett, who will not be entitled to any initial administration funding as they jumped ship halfway through a

campaign cycle. I am glad to see in that respect that that type of disloyalty will not be rewarded in this bill by granting administration costs. Following the election, administration costs will be given to those Independents. It will be given to the other Independents in the House.

The current model provides public funding to candidates and political parties as reimbursement after the election. The amount of reimbursement is calculated on the basis of the first preference votes received if the candidate gained four per cent of the formal first preference in that particularly electorate.

We do currently have public funding in Queensland. No-one is denying it. However, it is certainly not to the extent that will apply after the introduction of this bill. Public funding of campaigns has been talked about for many, many years. In a speech given by Wayne Goss to the Australian Study of Parliament Group he talked about the Fitzgerald report. He said—

Fitzgerald recommended the establishment of two new bodies—the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission and the Criminal Justice Commission ...

He went on further to say—

Review of EARC was left to the committee and the implementation of these recommendations was left to the Government.

He said—

Importantly, in my view, the committee undertook widespread public consultation on what was a very controversial area involving, for example, Queensland's electoral boundaries.

He also talked about electoral reform. He said—

The independent umpire—

being EARC—

came down with a recommendation for electoral reform which was almost but not entirely one vote, one value in the sense that for very large electorates, of which there were five, there was a weighting allowed in terms of enrolments.

So we had a situation where the Fitzgerald report recommended certain tightening up of the political process and the electoral system. We had EARC being established essentially to look at electoral boundaries, but it did delve into other areas. Then we had a former Labor Party Premier of Queensland, Wayne Goss, talking about one vote, one value, which of course we depart from in this bill.

Currently, public funding is determined by votes received multiplied by the election funding rate, which is approximately \$1.59. Reimbursement will not exceed the amount that was spent on an individual campaign to ensure that candidates do not profit from their candidacy in an election campaign. In a nutshell, our current system represents the one vote, one value method. The proposed system of public funding significantly enhances the Labor Party and the Greens in Queensland—surprising!

In the 2009 state election in Queensland the Labor Party received 42.25 per cent of the primary vote, the LNP received 41.6 per cent and the Greens received 8.37 per cent. However, current polling has the Labor Party primary votes hovering at around 32 per cent—which I think is one of the lowest in a historical context—the LNP at 45 per cent and the Greens at 10 per cent. The system of public funding that is proposed in this bill is described in section 177DA. The bill states that, if a registered political party incurs electoral expenditure for the election of not more than 10 per cent of the cap, 100 per cent is given back. If the registered political party incurs electoral expenditure of more than 10 per cent but not more than 90 per cent of the applicable expenditure cap, a sliding scale model of public funding is available for candidates.

Using data from the 2009 state election and the formula for public funding that is proposed in this bill, this would allow the Greens to run relatively inexpensive campaigns through a central campaign and receive close to a 100 per cent subsidy. I will look at comparative results of the three major parties with 2009 data. Assuming that each candidate and party spends the maximum amount made up of \$50,000 that candidates can spend individually in their electorate plus the \$80,000 across the state in each electorate the parties can spend, the Greens would receive a public funding subsidy of approximately \$38 per vote. So we go from a situation of \$1.60 a vote—one vote, one value at the moment—to the Greens potentially receiving \$38 a vote if they spend their cap compared to the LNP receiving around \$8 a vote and the Labor Party receiving \$8.35. That to me is wrong. It is incomprehensible that we could be putting that burden of taxpayers' money on Queenslanders—that is, for someone who receives just over four per cent of the vote. If they spend their cap, they are entitled to some \$38 back when we look at the primary vote statistics. Given that breakdown, it makes it obvious to understand why the Greens have been so supportive of public funding election campaigns at a federal level for quite some time.

Again, to assist in balancing the ledger of fairness, we believe that all candidates—no matter which political party or if they stand as an Independent—should be entitled to receive the same funding on a per vote basis: one vote, one value. How on earth could members opposite support a move that would see candidates who receive just over four per cent of the vote getting up to \$38 a vote? It is an insane proposition. That said, I will be moving an amendment in the consideration in detail stage that seeks to amend this unfairness by providing that, based on the calculations in the bill for public funding and the sliding scale, the party that ultimately wins the election and is entitled to public funding will be the limit for candidates—one vote, one value for everyone despite political party preferences or the Independents who run.

One of the measures that was initially introduced in the August 2009 discussion paper related to a change in the optional preferential method of voting in Queensland, a move that would significantly enhance the Labor-Green alliance ahead of the next state poll. In its wisdom, the government decided not to change the voting method to bring it into line with the national method of compulsory preferential voting. However, the political life of the Labor Party seems fixated on this preference flow and the vote of the Greens. Even though Queensland has an optional preferential system of voting, Green preferences may be crucial in deciding many of the electoral divisions around the state.

I am supportive of the provisions in the bill which allow for the provisional enrolment of 16- and 17-year-olds on the electoral roll. I believe it is fundamental that we continually embrace methods that engage our youth in our system of democracy. One method to do so is to encourage people to provisionally enrol to vote at a younger age so that it will become an automatic enrolment when they turn 18. Schools may embrace this amendment as part of the curriculum on democracy, including the process of provisional enrolment as an authentic educational tool. I know that I and many other members discuss democracy in the schools in our electorates, including how parliament works and our method for electing people to public office. I can inform the House today that, when I have been attending schools in my electorate recently, all of the children have been very excited at the future prospect of a can-do real government in Queensland. They are very excited about that prospect.

Mr Lucas: That is extraordinary that you would talk politically with kids at schools, because that is one thing I have never sought to do.

Mr BLEIJIE: As members of this parliament—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! Members on my right will cease interjecting.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Brisbane Central will cease interjecting.

Mr BLEIJIE: What the members opposite fail to understand is that, to have a true democratic process in Queensland, our children should be taught the ins and outs of politics. If members opposite think that year 5, year 6 or year 7 students or university students should be stymied in their opinion on political debate, then that is a hypocrisy from those members. Engaging our young students and our younger citizens in the political process should be on the continual increase. In that respect, Queensland should lead the way.

When we look at young people who have been elected to parliament, at the last state election in 2009 the member for Morayfield was elected as a representative of the Labor Party and I was elected for the LNP, representing a 26-year-old and a 27-year-old being elected to parliament. Wyatt Roy was elected into the federal parliament for the LNP at the August 2010 election at the age of 20. For our Sunshine Coast Regional Council elections next year, many young people have put their names forward. They have the passion and they want to represent council, state or federal divisions, which is great.

During the New South Wales state election campaign, Premier Barry O'Farrell was asked a question at a community forum along these lines: 'What can you do to engage younger people in the political process?' The response he proffered was that he meets with school captains of the schools in his electorate each year for an annual dinner at Parliament House. The one thing he always tells them is, 'I don't care if you don't vote for me as long as you go and vote.' Voting is not a hard task but it is important to engage our young people in the process. It is the key to restoring faith in our system of government in Queensland. If younger Queenslanders can look at a local, state and federal government and see representatives from all sides of politics in their age group, all of a sudden public office does not appear to be for older generations—and I say that with the greatest respect to older generations, of course.

Allowing citizens who enrol or update their enrolment details after the writs for an election have been issued, and up to 5pm on the day before polling day, to make a provisional declaration vote will also open opportunities for more people to exercise their democratic right to vote in an election. I think we should engage in a way forward that certainly looks at security measures. If we are looking at these types of voting procedures, we need to up the ante on the way that people enrol to vote. We need to look at potential identification and make sure that fraud cannot be committed with any of these provisional declaration voting systems.

Yesterday the Deputy Premier issued a media statement along the lines that, by opposing this bill, the LNP somehow is going back to the dark old days of unlimited funding for campaigns. Can I just say on the record that there is one fundamental element of this bill—and I have not seen anything publicly about it but I am certainly hoping that the Attorney-General will address this issue—and that is when people donate to a political party, either for campaign purposes or the political party gets its administration fee, any Queensland, any business, any union or any corporation can, in fact, make a donation to a candidate or a political party for an unlimited amount of money. As long as that person does not spend it for campaign purposes, it is not covered by this bill and it is not covered by the act. So when the Deputy Premier—the

Acting Premier today—issued a statement yesterday talking about the bad old days of unlimited funds being given to political parties and putting this bill up to end all of that and to cap people's donations and expenditure on political parties, there is one major element missing: a person can come to me and donate \$2,000 to my campaign. I will then get that \$2,000 and put it into my state campaign account. The next day that person can come back to me and write me a cheque for \$1 million, \$2 million or \$5 million. All I have to do is make sure that I do not spend it in the limited definition of political expenditure in this bill and I have a very good slush fund. For argument's sake, with this bill we are saying, 'We've got to do this to cap donations and it is going to stop this and it is going to stop that,' but it will not. It will not stop it, because people can still make unlimited donations as long as it is not covered in the limited definition of electoral expenditure. That flies in the face of this government saying that this bill has to be passed to limit the expenditure of members and to really crack down on those donations that people are receiving, because candidates are still going to receive unlimited amounts of money and nothing in this bill can stop that.

I look forward to an explanation from the Attorney-General as to how he can put this bill into this House, say that it is going to stop this and stop that but, at the same time, when a person comes with a cheque for \$2 million and deposits it into an account of a candidate of a political party or an Independent candidate, that person can use that money for whatever purpose. I guess, in broad spectrum, without having the money for a campaign purpose, you could make the assumption that not only will the Labor Party receive \$2 million in administration funding guaranteed each year but also it can receive in excess of millions and millions on top of the public funding. So I ask the Deputy Premier: why the public funding of \$26 million when people across Queensland still have the ability to help political parties administer their head office, administer their coffee machines? But no, the government is going to the people of Grantham, it is going to those other people across Queensland who are living in tents because of the floods and cyclones and it is going to say, 'We want you to fund our political campaigns and we want you to fund our campaign offices and head offices for public purposes.'

Along with a few other members of the parliament, I received a briefing from departmental staff. I can understand the nature of this bill and its complexities, but I have to say that, when I put some fundamental, simple questions in relation to the practicalities of this bill to the many representatives of the department and staff from the Deputy Premier's office, which went around and around the table and could not be answered, we have serious problems. We know that the government will force through this bill. We have serious problems when simple questions cannot be answered two days, 48 hours before the bill is put through the parliament. I think that highlights the point that I made earlier about the haste with which this bill has been put into this House.

In the briefing I asked a question in terms of this unlimited funding that candidates can still receive and I asked for some examples. The example that I was given was that we could host a constituent morning tea. But I think that there are serious issues with receiving administration funding and hosting a constituent morning tea. In hosting the constituent morning tea, am I advocating for votes? Does that not delve into the issues of what is our electorate expenditure in terms of our parliamentary allowances? So the bill is fraught with danger, because once it is passed with little regulation, we are going to have interpretations made by the courts about what is in and what is out. What is for a campaign purpose—

Mr Lucas: Don't tell me legislation is interpreted by courts!

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection from the Deputy Premier. Yesterday we debated a bill that amends the committee system in this place. That bill fundamentally changes the way in which legislation is drafted and debated in this House. That bill went down to the drafting practicalities and how the advice is given to Parliamentary Counsel to draft legislation. At all times we should endeavour to make sure that we are putting legislation through this House—hence the new committee system—that has been debated vigorously in an open and public forum before members vote on it in this House. Is that not the system that we are going to be introducing? Is that not the whole point? It is a shame that this bill will not go through that process, because these issues could have been, so to speak, flogged out in that committee process and potential answers given.


It concerns me that when I put questions at a departmental briefing a lot of them could not be answered in terms of the simple practicalities of how it will work afterwards. The Electoral Commission cannot issue directives, because the bill has not been passed and the bill does not necessarily say that it can regulate the issue. So I warn the Deputy Premier, just as we warned the then minister for infrastructure and planning that the sustainability declarations for people who are selling their houses would be amended—and I think we are up to the fifth or sixth version of the form already—that the same will happen to this bill.

For instance, in the briefing I asked a question in relation to electoral expenditure. We have campaign expenditure that is capped at \$50,000. I asked about the corflute. Firstly, I had to describe what a campaign corflute was. Then I asked this question, 'I would think that the corflute of a candidate would be covered under the cap. But then is the timber frame that the candidate has purchased that is attached to the corflute covered under the cap?' Some in the room said, 'Potentially' and some in the room said, 'No.' This is important, because candidates will have \$50,000 to spend in their electorates and they are going

to have to know whether the thousands that they spend on the timber A-frames that the corflutes go on is going to be covered or not covered. So in terms of many of these issues I think we need to go through a rigorous process of what is in and what is out during the consideration in detail stage.

The other issue that I raised related to volunteer labour. Volunteer labour is specifically excluded in the bill, but it does refer to the provision of a service, excluding voluntary labour. I raised that issue in the briefing. Say a candidate engages the voluntary service of a typist to type some letters, but also a lawyer comes in and provides a voluntary service in terms of giving legal advice. Are we discriminating against the lawyer or are we discriminating against the typist? The advice given in the briefing was that the typist would potentially be providing volunteer labour and the lawyer would be caught in the provision of giving a gift in kind because of the provision of a service. These issues are going to be so compliant heavy that candidates are going to be wondering when someone rings up their campaign office and says, 'I want to come in for an hour and do some typing,' whether they are in or out or whether they have to disclose that as part of their cap. So this bill is going to create many issues. I also asked, 'How much is this costing Queensland taxpayers?'

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

 **Mr BLEIJIE:** Before the lunchbreak I asked the Deputy Premier where the amounts came from. What brains trust in the Labor Party came up with a \$50,000 expenditure cap for candidates and \$80,000 per electorate in the 89 seats across Queensland for a political party? I guess the question to the Deputy Premier is: where did the amounts come from? That was a question I asked in the briefing. Departmental and policy staff were unable to advise the members of parliament who attended the briefing how on earth they came up with these amounts. When we are talking about electoral funding laws for candidates on all sides of politics, someone should tell us where the \$50,000 and \$80,000 amounts came from. Clearly, departmental staff did not fully comprehend the practical nature of this terrible bill that we are debating today. If they did, they would have been able to advise about those amounts and, as I have already indicated, they would have been able to give the advice that we sought in relation to some of the practical applications of this bill after it is assented to.

It is also worth noting that this legislation essentially copies the New South Wales legislation. There could be no more negligent and corrupt government than the New South Wales former Labor government. Queensland is potentially on the verge of that now. This legislation essentially copies that legislation, which did not do particularly well for the Labor Party in New South Wales because they were nearly entirely voted out of office.

The LNP has also introduced a bill, the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill. The purpose of that bill is to address an element that is crucial to any election campaign: political advertising. The bill is particularly aimed at candidates and political parties with a do-whatever-it-takes approach to achieving public office in Queensland. I am told that two of the things politicians do that destroys the fabric of our democratic system are make promises they cannot deliver on and make promises before an election and then do the opposite straight after. These are all part of the fabric and are essential elements of the modern Queensland Labor Party. But one thing that is clear today is that this government's bill in its current form is repugnant. That is why I am proposing a series of integrity tests for the government. If they fail to support them, we are most certainly justified in opposing the legislation.

The amendments I propose will seek to address the glaring unfairness and imbalance in relation to trade unions, despite their direct links to the Labor Party. Last night the member for Keppel declared that the Labor party was the political arm of the trade union movement. The first amendment will seek to have affiliated industrial organisations to one or more political parties considered as an associated entity and brought under the spending and donation caps. The second amendment seeks to ensure that no one political party profits or benefits more than the other political party. This will be done by limiting the amount of public funding to the lesser of either the formula contained in the bill or the amount the winning party receives per vote.

The final integrity test for this government involves closing the unfair loopholes which see trade union officials working for the Labor Party during election campaigns allowed to be included as volunteer labour. Our amendment will see all those bused-in union hacks from interstate included as gifts-in-kind and will stop the unfair advantage enjoyed by Labor for years. This is in contrast to the *Election Funding and Disclosure Handbook*, published by the Electoral Commission, which specifically exempts affiliated unions from disclosure provisions regarding the gift of labour. In essence, the bill allows Labor to beat both the expenditure cap and the donation cap by treating unions as affiliated for the purposes of gifts but not affiliated for the purposes of third-party campaigns.

As I said before, how can one stand in this place time and time again, as the Deputy Premier has, and claim the moral high ground when there have been so many dark clouds hanging over the Deputy Premier's head? The New South Wales Sussex Street Labor style of politics has come to Queensland with the approach of 'say whatever you can to retain office'. It smacks of desperation from a long-term Labor

government that is out of ideas, low on talent—very low on talent—and taking Queensland back some 20 years.

When one puts all this together—and we brandish around this House the Shepherdson inquiry report—it is so reminiscent of the culture that has thrived in the Labor Party. If the Labor Party in Queensland is in financial difficulty then it should seek its own funding and not rely on taxpayers to come up with the money and fork out for its campaigns and administration costs. Let us not forget about Mike Kaiser, the convicted vote rorter who is the Premier's former chief of staff. He is the former chief of staff of the current Premier and he was also Morris Iemma's chief of staff in the lead-up to the second-last election. Labor has created these ALP 'Navy SEALs' who deploy to do their master's dirty work in any state or territory across Australia. When we put all this together and we talk about the electoral rorting that was revealed in the Shepherdson inquiry, we can say that, but for the grace of the statute of limitations, the make-up of this place—of members of parliament—would be considerably different had some of the offences not fallen outside the statute-of-limitations period. Then we would certainly see a change in the landscape of politics in Queensland.

When one puts this together, the disgraced Deputy Premier, saved by the statute of limitations, is now pushing ahead with fundamental electoral changes. The same man who was noted in the Shepherdson inquiry, the same man on Seventh Avenue named in the Shepherdson inquiry, is the one pushing for electoral law changes 24 hours after a federal annual budget and 24 hours before one of the most corrupt men in Queensland political history comes before the bar of the House. The Deputy Premier, who is associated to some extent with all that has gone before in this House in the Shepherdson inquiry, who served in the same cabinet as Gordon Nuttall, is pushing forward with electoral changes. He is getting the people of Grantham who are living in tents and the people in Townsville who cannot afford to rebuild their homes to pay for his election campaigns.

This beast is not the LNP's beast; this beast is the Labor Party's beast. We are stuck with it, because we know it is going to pass through this House. Queenslanders will know that this beast was created by the Labor Party government, not the LNP. When the Deputy Premier is fundamentally changing electoral law in Queensland, it is sadly a case of the cookie monster being placed in charge of the cookie jar.