



Speech by


**Michael Crandon**

**MEMBER FOR COOMERA**

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

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (5.09 pm): This debate is a cognate one dealing with the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill 2010, the Electoral Reform Bill 2010 and the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011. The Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill 2010 was introduced by the member for Surfers Paradise and it is about honest, open and accountable government. As part of enshrining an honest and accountable system of government, the LNP is making a commitment to major reform of parliament and electoral processes. We know that ensuring honest and truthful election advertising is a crucial element of a fair and just democratic electoral system. This bill is about restoring the confidence of the people of Queensland in our electoral process and restoring honesty in government, enabling the people of Queensland to respect our democratic system rather than being suspicious of it. To do this, we seek to introduce a series of offences into the Electoral Act 1992 and the Local Government Act 2009. It will be an offence for a person to authorise the publication of false or misleading electoral advertising. The bill also makes it an offence for a person to make a false or misleading statement purporting to be fact that is inaccurate or misleading to a material extent. It gives certain powers to the Electoral Commission to direct the advertiser of the misleading or false information to withdraw it from publication or publish a retraction.

We all remember the barrage of false claims and false election promises from this tired, old Labor government. Queenslanders have been betrayed, let down and cheated by a democratic system that has no checks in place to stop tired, old Labor. When Queenslanders are told that their assets will not be sold, they have a right to believe their assets will not be sold. What about the 100,000 breadwinners—100,000 jobs—will be created story? Queenslanders have a right to believe that those 100,000 full-time jobs will be created. No fuel tax was another dishonest statement, as we all know as we feel it in our hip pocket every time we fill up our tanks. This Labor government refuses to deal with dishonesty in the parliament and dishonesty in political advertising. We on the other hand are committed to drive the reform agenda that will restore public confidence in the parliament.

This bill is the next step towards an honest parliament. The true test will be whether this Labor government is willing to step up and support it. The amendments also extend the same standards to local government elections. The Electoral Reform Bill 2010 is a joke perpetrated on this place by a joker and a stuntman. This is the member who goes from stage to stage with his one-man band. Who can remember the *Big Brother* gatecrash that started his career as a stuntman? There have been plenty of stunts since then, all designed to maximise his media coverage. A proposal to move all poker machines to 'Roma Vegas' is one more recent effort, culminating yesterday in his stunt in this place that found him giving a radio interview on ABC Radio in which he was well and truly done over by the interviewer. He was arguing both sides of the argument at various times throughout the interview. We then heard a representative from Sisters Inside that put paid to his argument. I will not give any more oxygen to that particular bill.

The Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011 is a farce. A farce is a comedy which aims to entertain the audience by means of unlikely, extravagant and improbable situations, disguise and mistaken identity and verbal humour at varying degrees of sophistication which may include, among other things, word play. Let us look at this bill and compare it to this description—a comedy. There is no doubt that this would be comical if it were not so absurd. There is no doubt that the author considers himself a comedian. A farce aims to entertain by means of unlikely, extravagant and improbable situations. We certainly have these features. Under 'reasons for the bill', the explanatory notes state—

The Bill aims to improve the integrity and public accountability of state elections. The reforms aim to limit any potential for undue influence being exercised by any one donor or lobby group in relation to an election campaign—or any perception of such influence.

I have one word to describe the dishonesty of this statement: unions. No-one in this state would ever believe that the unions do not exert undue influence in an election campaign and the unions are specifically excluded from the definition as a donor or lobby group. Indeed, the unions can work with their political arm, the Labor members of this House, and target seats as required by the political arm. If each union registers as a third party, they can spend up to \$500,000 each across the state. We can see that the definition of 'farce' is accurate yet again in that it refers to disguise and mistaken identity. That is what the Labor Party would have us believe is not the case. However, the member for Keppel let the cat out of the bag last night when he drew the curtain back and exposed the identity of the relationship.

Finally, I turn to the word play that this tired, old Labor government uses to couch the real reason for this reform as outlined by the Leader of the Opposition earlier in the debate. After all these years this government is doing it tough. It copped a hiding during the global financial crisis. So instead of being able to rely on its own organisation to fund the election, it wants the public purse to pay for it, all the time having the unions in the wings to inject their members' annual fees into targeted seats. So union members should make no mistake that, if this bill passes through this place, they are going to pay twice.

As Queensland residents, they are going to contribute anywhere between \$26 million and \$30 million—or even more perhaps—to all political campaigns instead of the current \$3 million and they are going to pay half of it up front before the election even starts. As union members they are going to fund targeted union campaigns to the tune of another \$11 million—a total of \$37 million to \$40 million from mums and dads. This tired, old Labor government is so desperate that it is prepared to hit its own union members twice. That is like a mother eating its baby. It does not care.

It is desperate, and desperate people do desperate things. Remember, it has lost Queensland's AAA credit rating and it sold our assets to fund the huge interest bill it created on the forecast \$80 billion debt. That is desperate. Those union members who are going to be hit twice by this legislation are the same ones who desperately need more hospital beds, the asbestos removed from their children's schools and upgrades to the highways that they have to traverse in heavy traffic every day to get to work. And how much could \$26 million do in the ongoing reconstruction effort?

Farce is also characterised by physical humour, the use of deliberate absurdity or nonsense, and broadly stylised performances. There is no doubt that we see plenty of that from the Attorney-General and the rest of the ministry in this desperate, tired, old government. Many farces move at a frantic pace towards the climax, often with a twist of the plot. How true is this? As the Leader of the Opposition alluded to, government members are in their last days and so the climax is upon them. By perpetrating this diabolical plot on the people of Queensland they are trying to put a twist in the plot.

In a farce the protagonist may get away with what he or she has been trying to hide at all costs, even if it is a criminal act. We can once again liken that statement to this bill and this government. It may very well get away with it because it has the numbers in this place. However, generally in a farce there is a happy ending. The government may win this battle because it has the numbers in here, but at the end of the day it has to face the people of Queensland at the next election. It will be reminded of the \$26 million that it has foisted upon the residents of Queensland and it has to face its union members, who will be paying far above anything they ever imagined just so it can try to hang on to government. We will remind them that not only do they have to pay the \$26 million bill; they will also be paying \$11 million in union fees towards its election campaign. Finally, 'farce' in general tends to depict human beings as vain, irrational, venal and infantile neurotics, and that absolutely describes this tired, old Labor government.