




Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

Hansard Wednesday, 11 May 2011

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

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—LNP) (4.28 pm): The Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill proposes to insert a new part 9A into the Electoral Act 1992 to, among other things, cap political donations and campaign expenditures and provide for an increase in public funding for state elections. It is obvious this government has shrewdly protected the revenue that the Labor Party is able to raise from its major support base—the unions. I have no problem with this issue. However, the bill effectively hampers the ability of others to raise funds.

This is a desperate attempt by the Labor Party to limit the ability of the LNP in particular to raise campaign funds while carefully protecting its greatest source of revenue and exploiting the other source of revenue—that is, the taxpayer. It is a disgrace that this government is introducing what will be a \$26 million expense to Queensland at a time when we are facing a recovery bill from natural disasters of over \$5 billion and a state debt of over \$80 billion and when mum-and-dad taxpayers are struggling with the rising cost of living. Why isn't this \$26 million being used to improve our failing health system, to restore our appalling road network or to contribute to rebuilding our devastated state? The government will plead that democracy is expensive but so is the rebuilding of our state, the cost of living, the cost of water and the cost of electricity. This bill is not democratic; this is about saving this government's political hide. This is about protecting those who are in power at the expense of the battlers in need.

If there was a line showing the point at which the government completely lost touch with the people it was supposed to represent, this Labor government has well and truly crossed it. There is no argument that donations to political parties must be transparent and that political parties must be accountable in regard to campaign expenditure. However, the blatant protectionism being employed by this government in classifying a parent company and its affiliates as a single entity yet refusing to acknowledge the affiliation of Labor's source of funding is politics at its lowest.

The member for Cook asked why anyone would want to provide a large donation to a political party. It is simple. As members would probably remember, when John Howard handed down his industrial relations laws the unions mounted a massive campaign. Anyone who ran a \$50 million campaign on 700 pages of legislation would scare the living crap out of anyone, and it was understandable—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Dalrymple, the use of that word is unparliamentary.

Mr KNUTH: I withdraw. The Labor Party must be reciprocal. If people want to support political parties—especially when we have a bad government which is causing the loss of a AAA credit rating, forced council amalgamations, a health crisis, a water crisis, an energy crisis and rising energy costs—then the government must be accountable and reciprocal. My grandfather would be turning in his grave about the way Labor Party members have turned their backs on the working-class people. What is the best that Labor members can offer? They are starving other political parties of the ability to run an effective campaign and slamming taxpayers with a \$27 million bill, all in exchange for saving their political hide.