




Speech By  
**Leanne Linard**

**MEMBER FOR NUDGE**

---

Record of Proceedings, 7 May 2015

### **ELECTORAL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (7.44 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Electoral and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. From the outset, I would like to thank the Premier and the Attorney-General for making this bill the first to be introduced into the parliament under this new Palaszczuk Labor government. The bill gives effect to the government's election commitment to increase transparency and accountability, a key focus for this government and a key concern over the past three years for the Queensland community.

The key objectives of the bill are to reinstate the \$1,000 gift threshold amount, backdated to 21 November 2013; facilitate real-time disclosure of political donations; and remove voter proof-of-identity requirements. In addition, the bill will clarify when a fundraising contribution is a gift, remove voter proof-of-identity requirements for local government elections and give effect to the government's election commitment that the chair of the Crime and Corruption Commission will have access to a judicial pension.

The lifting of the gift disclosure threshold in 2013 to make it possible for someone to donate up to \$12,400 to a candidate or political party and not have to declare it ensured that the vast bulk of political donations would be unseen—dare I say, hidden. Queenslanders deserve to know who is making significant donations to political parties and how much they are donating. Our legislation will return the gift disclosure threshold to \$1,000; require the special reporting of large gifts of \$100,000 or more; reduce the threshold for permitted anonymous gifts to political parties from \$12,800 as currently indexed to \$1,000; and restore six-monthly reporting by political parties and associated entities, backdated where practicable to 21 November 2013. This government has also committed to work with the Electoral Commission of Queensland to develop a real-time online system of disclosure of electoral donations to further enhance the timeliness and transparency of the electoral gift disclosure regime.

There is without doubt a valid place for donations to political candidates and political parties in our democratic system. Politics inspires passion in many and a desire to be a part of the process. For some, this takes the form of making a financial contribution to a particular candidate's campaign or a political party more generally. I am sure every member in this room was the beneficiary of such contributions during the recent election. But the substantive issue before us today is whether they should be out in the open for all to see or secret.

I appreciate that some have raised issues regarding donors' rights to privacy, inhibiting political freedom and costs of compliance. However, in the opinion of this government and the broader community—certainly by many in my community—these concerns are outweighed by the need for accountability and transparency. The bill before us returns Queensland to the low gift disclosure threshold that was in place for 20 years prior to the November 2013 legislation and more in line with electoral gift disclosure thresholds operating across the country, including \$1,000 in New South Wales, \$1,000 in the Australian Capital Territory and \$2,300 in Western Australia. I also note that submissions made to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee during consideration of the

bill by the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties, the Bar Association of Queensland and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services were all supportive of lowering the threshold.

The bill also seeks to remove discriminatory and unnecessary voter proof-of-identity requirements for both local and state governments introduced by the former government. I have two key issues with the legislative changes introduced by the former LNP government regarding voter proof-of-identity requirements: first and foremost, that they reduce participation in our democratic system rather than enhance and encourage it; and, secondly, that they were introduced on the premise that there was an issue to be addressed, when we have seen no evidence to prove that such an issue exists. I am all for Queensland leading the race but not a race to the bottom, and in saying so I refer to the fact that Queensland is the only jurisdiction in Australia to have such an unnecessary and retrograde requirement.

I note the comments of some members opposite that voters without proof-of-identity documents were able to make a declaration vote, but this does not tell the whole story as these figures do not show how many Queenslanders did not get to vote at all because of the new laws. The existing requirements have the potential to discriminate against already marginalised Queenslanders, like young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, new migrants and those without a fixed address and ready access to identity documents. I have already mentioned during my first address to this House that almost half of the people in the Nudgee electorate speak a language other than English at home. Many new migrants call the electorate of Nudgee home, and I cannot support the legislative change introduced by the opposition that effectively served to create additional barriers to their inclusion in our democratic process.

The bill's proposed amendments to the Crime and Corruption Act 2001 and Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act 1957 aim to ensure that the Crime and Corruption Commission chair will have access to a judicial pension as part of the remuneration package for that position, but more importantly it will ensure that we are attracting people of the highest standing and necessary skills and experience to the role. The pension will be available to a Crime and Corruption Commission chair who serves at least five years in the position once they reach the age of 65.

I thank the Attorney-General for taking such a strong stand on behalf of Queenslanders to accountability and transparency reform and to a strong and independent Crime and Corruption Commission. I had the pleasure of working with the former police minister and Queensland Police Service under the leadership of former police commissioner Bob Atkinson. This role gave me the opportunity to see the former Crime and Misconduct Commission at close quarters. The commission, along with significant reform of the Queensland Police Service, are vestiges of the Fitzgerald inquiry, an inquiry that changed the policing and political landscape across Queensland. In his 1989 report, the Hon. Tony Fitzgerald considered as part of his deliberations the link between political donations and potential corruption and the need to eliminate the possibility of improper favour being shown by the government to political donors. While the Fitzgerald report was tabled in this House 26 years ago, its lessons remain equally valid today and continued vigilance is imperative. The independence of the commission is vital to ensuring the integrity of Queensland's public institutions, as is ensuring the chairperson responsible for its functions is of the highest standing. I believe that the Queensland Police Service remains truly vigilant to these lessons. The Queensland public demands it and those opposite forgot it at best, and ignored it at worst, at their peril.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee which received 530 submissions, a testament to the strength of public sentiment in regard to these issues. I once again take this opportunity to thank the Premier and Attorney-General for making this bill the first to be introduced into the parliament in keeping with this government's commitment to restoring transparency and accountability in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.