




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles

MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

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ELECTORAL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (4.22 pm): I rise to speak in support of a critically important bill—one that I know is strongly supported by my constituents. The matters contained in this bill were among the reasons they voted out the previous government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask that you will indulge me briefly. Today, the labour movement lost a legend. Des Holloway, who many of my colleagues knew and loved, succumbed to a horrible illness a few hours ago. Des was a long-time official of the FEDFA and the QPSU, where I had the honour of working with him. Des was lovely, humble, caring and intelligent. I offer my heart and condolences to Garbo and the rest of Des's family.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Dr MILES: The key objectives of the bill are to give effect to the government's election commitments to amend the Electoral Act to reinstate the \$1,000 gift threshold amount down from \$12,800, backdated to 21 November 2013; to remove voter proof-of-identity requirements designed to suppress voter participation of young people, Indigenous people, old people and people from non-English speaking backgrounds; and to facilitate real-time disclosure of political donations—an innovation that I think is long overdue.

The Leader of the Opposition seems to think that this is a revenge attack by the Palaszczuk government or, as he calls it, a political get square; that it is pay-back time for the party and its donors, prompted by malice against the LNP. But I have news for members opposite. It is not about them. It is not about the LNP or the people who donate to the LNP; it is actually about the people of Queensland. It is about giving the people of Queensland the government they deserve—a government that is fair, open, transparent and accountable. We owe it to Queensland.

We have always said that this bill would be at the top of our government's agenda once the parliament resumed. That is how seriously we take this issue—that it is so intrinsically part of good government. We are determined that our decision-making will be seen to be impartial and objective. We are not in the business of getting re-elected at any cost. This bill delivers on our clear election commitments to place increased transparency and accountability at the forefront of the Palaszczuk government. We have practised what we preach.

Since the LNP's changes to increase the level of secrecy and decrease the level of accountability around political donations, we have continued to voluntarily disclose all donations over \$1,000. My campaign was funded almost entirely by much smaller donations. In fact, the average donation to my campaign was \$76. We raised more than \$30,000 from small donations like that. On the other hand, the LNP spent three years collecting wads of cash. Who from? In many cases the people of Queensland may never know unless we pass this bill into law. Did the donors get favourable treatment from the government? There is no way of knowing that either because of the secrecy and concealment that was a hallmark of the LNP fundraising machine.

Time and again we have seen how the LNP's view of good government is to provide the best government that money can buy. 'Roll up, roll up' is their approach when it comes to soliciting donations. 'Welcome to the LNP where donations can be exchanged for a sizzling hot deal. We will tear up legislation, give you a lucrative government contract or dishonour an election promise all for the right price.' Let us look at some of the former government's dodgy deals. First up we have to start with Sibelco—the company hungry to extend its sandmining leases on North Stradbroke Island. Prior to the 2012 election they coughed up more than \$1 million for a hard-hitting campaign. Sibelco also came good with a political donation of more than \$90,000 in the seat of Ashgrove. In a 2012 radio interview, Campbell Newman—

An honourable member interjected.

Dr MILES: These are the three we know about. How many do we not know about? In 2012 Campbell Newman said twice that he would not extend Sibelco's mining interests. But then, come November 2013, the Newman government amended the legislation to allow mineral sandmining by Sibelco up to 2035. It also removed the usual objection and judicial review rights. Sibelco stood to benefit \$1.5 billion in additional revenue.

Then there is Karreman Quarries, which was facing prosecution for illegal quarrying. But, surprise, surprise, the LNP government passed a last-minute amendment retrospectively legalising its activities. The change to the law meant that officials were no longer able to prosecute the company. The amendment was drawn up on the orders of the then deputy premier. The highly unusual legislation was shrouded in secrecy. Karreman Quarries handed over \$75,000 to the LNP, making it one of its largest donors.

Just this week a further disturbing issue has emerged, the approval given for wholesale clearing of the Olive Vale property on Cape York. We have heard how the previous government, in contravention of the caretaker conventions, approved a land-clearing permit for more than 30,000 hectares. The deforestation planned at Olive Vale is on a massive scale. It represents about a third of the total annual rate of clearing in Labor's last year in office. This property is on Cape York and the deforestation will detrimentally affect the part of the Great Barrier Reef that is still in pretty good shape.

We know the owners of Olive Vale have donated to the LNP. Is there a connection between the inappropriate issuing of a clearing permit and their donations? Who could know? Let us hope the investigation announced yesterday will find out.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! Member for Hinchinbrook.

Dr MILES: These are just three controversies that we know about. There are many we do not know about because of the secrecy.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Hinchinbrook.

Dr MILES: This bill is about restoring confidence and faith in a democratic system tarnished in the years of the LNP government. It is about openness, accountability and integrity. Decisions should not be influenced by cash donations. When they are, then confidence in our political system is shattered. From my experience, Queenslanders want to know who is donating what to political candidates or parties. They are extremely concerned that the LNP has mastered the art of accepting corporate donations in return for what I mentioned earlier: the best government that money can buy.

Many voters raise these concerns with me. In my electorate, where we are fighting on multiple fronts to protect our suburbs from inappropriate development allowed by the LNP city council, there is a perception that developers are listened to when residents are not because of big political donations. That is what the people I represent suspect, sometimes even believe. Maybe the opposition thinks otherwise and that donations should stay in the closet locked away from public view and that the people of Queensland do not have a right to know. I do not agree. I do not think Queenslanders agree. The question the LNP needs to answer is this: are they prepared to be upfront about who funded their election campaign and, if not, why not? What are they hiding?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, just one moment. Can those on my left just keep it down. I am finding it a little hard to hear.

Dr MILES: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Do they think that if a property developer fronts up with \$10,000 that Queenslanders have a right to know? This bill will help us restore accountability and integrity to democracy in Queensland. I commend it to the House.