




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

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ELECTORAL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (4.41 pm): I rise to support the Electoral and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. In doing so, I wish to address the three areas that I think everyone here has identified as being germane to the bill, although I will address the issue of voter ID in greater depth than those areas associated with donation thresholds and the pension for the CCC chair. Giving the CCC chair access to a judicial-type pension will ensure that we get the right people with the highest skills and necessary standards of experience. It is vitally important that we have that set in place to overcome the challenges that has beset that role, unfortunately due to some underhanded politicisation of the role in recent times. This is part of addressing that issue and it is very important.

In relation to donation thresholds, many people seem to be very keen to talk about the matter. I find it quite extraordinary that in this state, which has a very significant and serious history of concern about untoward influence being pandered by money and moneyed activities in our politics, that anyone would be concerned about raising the bar by ensuring that there is a \$1,000 gift threshold for the declaration of disclosures. I contend that one of the key reasons for the result at the general state election on 31 January was that this state has fundamentally moved on. From the election of 31 January one of the fundamental lessons is that Queensland has changed from the bad old days of the pre-Fitzgerald Bjelke-Petersen era. Queensland and Queenslanders have changed. We are a more diverse, sophisticated and politically engaged community. In particular, we are a community that has no truck with even a whiff of corruption and no truck with even a whiff of favour and favouritism. Fundamentally, we are a fair society that wants to give people a fair go.

Over the past three years in this state we saw a government that believed it had to right the wrongs of the previous 20 years that it was out of office and, frankly, it overreached. Members on the other side know this: they went too far and they acted in ways that were unacceptable to the Queensland people, who then delivered that determination on 31 January. One thing the former government did was fail to keep a close handle on the issue of political donations, which is close to the hearts of many Queenslanders as it goes to transparency and ensuring that politics and political actors are accountable. This legislation contains an appropriate measure that will lower the threshold to \$1,000, back to where it was and back to the same threshold in other jurisdictions in the country. As this government promised, the legislation will capture donations, and make available that disclosure, backdated to 21 November 2013.

Turning to the issue of voter ID, I have heard all sorts of commentary based upon the committee report, committee hearings and all sorts of other hearsay in the debate so far today that there is a wildfire of outrage and concern about the fundamental undermining of our democratic institutions as a consequence of voter fraud. Apparently, there is a wildfire of voter fraud occurring in the Australian community. Over a quarter of a century, there have been 68 cases out of tens of millions of votes cast. Over that period, there would have been hundreds of millions of votes cast. That does not indicate that there is a problem with voter fraud.

The challenge here is that the issue of voter ID is fundamentally about chipping away at and undermining compulsory voting. The view is that compulsory voting is not appropriate or right, and that the best way to limit people's ability to vote is to create and insert barriers. It is interesting that it was actually a conservative government that introduced compulsory voting to Queensland in 1915. It introduced compulsory voting because it was very concerned that ALP shop stewards were more effective in getting the vote out. This seems to be a recurring motif. One hundred years on conservatives in this state are greatly concerned about the effectiveness of the trade union movement in mobilising the community. What a shame that is for their viewpoints. That is why those conservatives brought barriers into this state. Tonight we can rectify that by making sure that we remove the barriers associated with voter ID laws that make it more difficult for people—often the most vulnerable in our community—to exercise their democratic and, indeed I would contend, their sacred right to vote.

Earlier, the member for Gympie said that everyone needs an ID card to borrow a video. Voting is not like borrowing a video; voting is far more important than that.

Ms Trad: And videos are obsolete now.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I did hesitate. We had been talking about things from 1915. I was allowing some leeway about the borrowing of a video.

Ms Trad: It's called iTunes now or Netflix.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I take that interjection from the Deputy Premier. The reality is that voting is not a transaction. Voting is a right. It also needs to be and remain an obligation on members of our community to participate in their community and to participate in political life because that makes our life and our polity a better functioning one—one that engages everyone and not one that pushes away or pushes to one side those who are vulnerable or out of touch with the community and see them forgotten.

The thin edge of the wedge of voter ID laws is undermining compulsory voting. I am very happy to support the bill before the House—a bill that addresses three important issues. It addresses the issue of the pension for the PCCC chair, the appropriate level of disclosure for political donations and eliminates these unfair and undemocratic voter ID laws.