




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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CRIME AND CORRUPTION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (10.19 pm): I rise to speak in support of this important bill. Let us not forget that the Crime and Corruption Commission and the predecessor bodies that existed in Queensland prior to the Crime and Corruption Commission—including the Crime and Misconduct Commission and the Criminal Justice Commission—arose out of one of the darkest and most shameful periods of Queensland's political history. They were the events that led up to and culminated in the Fitzgerald inquiry. Central to those events was the conduct of the coalition government, particularly the National Party government in the latter part of the 1980s. If there is one thing the members of the LNP practise when in government, it is nobbling independent crime and corruption commissions.

Let us go back into history, because it is important for us to remember history when we come into this House to change the law in Queensland. In 1996 it was the Borbidge government which set up the Connolly-Ryan inquiry into the Criminal Justice Commission. One of its first actions when the Borbidge government came into office—

Ms Simpson interjected.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the member for Maroochydore. She was here at that time. One of the first actions that government took was to try to curtail the then CJC. In fact, the then National Party premier, Rob Borbidge, accused the CJC of 'a massive political vendetta' against his government. Of course, that continued. The echo of vendetta continued, and it was mentioned tonight by the member for Sunnybank. That government, of which the member for Maroochydore was a member, cut the budget of the CJC and ensured that a lot of its time was spent defending itself. The CJC had to spend its time defending itself before a royal commission established by the then Borbidge National Party government, the Connolly-Ryan inquiry.

The Newman government continued that tradition by thinking that the independent crime commission, the now Crime and Corruption Commission, was another arm of the executive government. The LNP has difficulty understanding that 'independence' means independence. The best example of the way the LNP regards such bodies is the way it used its very significant parliamentary majority—

Mr HART: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I would ask you to rule on relevance. The minister is all over the place here. Can we draw him back to the bill we are talking about?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): There is no point of order.

Mr DICK: I am coming to the bill. Members opposite do not want to reflect on, recall or even remember what happened in the last parliamentary term. The member for Burleigh was part of the LNP government that came in here in the middle of the night and sacked the cross-party committee that oversaw the Crime and Corruption Commission—that is, the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee. It sacked them in the middle of the night. That committee comprised two Independents, two

Labor members and three LNP members. When the committee failed to do what the Newman government wanted it to do, when it failed to do the Newman government's bidding in relation to the actions of the then head of the CCC, Dr Ken Levy, they sacked it. They sacked all of the members of the committee and appointed another committee, on which there was a majority of LNP members. That is how seriously the LNP regards the idea of independence.

When the Labor Party was in opposition in the last parliamentary term it undertook to undo the impact of those LNP amendments which undermined the Crime and Corruption Commission. Our government is now implementing those election commitments. The Crime and Corruption Commission is a vitally important part of modern Queensland democracy, and we tamper with its operation at our peril.

This bill seeks to restore the CCC's independence and integrity by providing, amongst other things, that the CCC chief executive officer is not a CCC commissioner. It also enshrines into law that there be bipartisan support from the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee for the appointment of the CEO. It also limits temporary appointments to three months for the CCC chair, commissioners and CEO unless there is bipartisan PCCC support. These last two matters of which I speak require bipartisan support. That is the sort of principle espoused by those on this side of the House: the requirement for bipartisan support, not the winner-take-all attitude which had been the hallmark of the only two conservative governments—the Borbidge coalition government and the Newman LNP government—which existed since the advent of the PCCC and its predecessors.

This bill also allows complaints to the CCC to be made anonymously. Furthermore, it restores important provisions which were struck out by the previous government. One of those changes was the change to the system so that complaints about corruption were to be made by way of statutory declaration unless there were exceptional circumstances. The tampering with legislation by those members opposite also removed the CCC's corruption prevention function. The LNP removed one of the key functions of the entity. The LNP also narrowed the CCC's research function to align strictly with supporting the performance of its functions rather than enabling it to research any matter relevant to its functions. The CCC's research activities required ministerial approval and consultation with the PCCC.

This bill will right those wrongs, and I commend the Attorney-General for introducing this bill into the parliament. It will also restore gender-neutral language to the title of the CCC chair's position. Of all the petty and small-minded things the LNP did in the previous government—wasting the parliament's time, wasting the legislature's time—it was to go through legislation in Queensland and change the titles of positions from gender neutral to gendered. That is what they did. They thought that was a relevant use of the parliament's time. That indicates the small-minded and petty approach the LNP are capable of when they are in government in Queensland.

This bill will support the efficient performance of the CCC's day-to-day financial management by removing current prohibitions on the CEO subdelegating the financial accountability functions under the Financial Accountability Act. This bill will achieve its objectives of restoring the CCC's independence and integrity, and all Queenslanders should take pride in that.

It goes without saying that I, like all my Labor colleagues, strongly support the CCC's crime-fighting and corruption-fighting powers. We see both the crime-fighting power and the corruption-fighting power as central parts of how we deliver democracy in Queensland. For those reasons, I commend the Attorney-General and I commend the bill to the parliament.