




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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CRIME AND CORRUPTION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (5.27 pm): I rise to oppose the Crime and Corruption Amendment Bill 2015. I note that the committee could not reach agreement on whether the bill should be passed, and there is very good reason for that, which I will expand on shortly.

When we talk about changes to crime and corruption legislation, we need to ensure that the appropriate consultation and consideration has been undertaken in a transparent way and without prejudice. The Crime and Corruption Commission is an extremely powerful and important statutory body set up to combat and reduce the incidence of major crime and corruption in the public sector in Queensland. Its functions and powers are set out in the Crime and Corruption Act 2001. The CCC investigates both crime and corruption, has oversight of both the police and the public sector, and protects witnesses. It is the only integrity agency in Australia with this range of functions. I want to remind the House of those functions that fall within the ambit of the CCC. In short, the CCC investigates organised crime, paedophilia, terrorist activity and other serious crime referred to it for investigation; receives and investigates allegations of serious or systemic corrupt conduct; helps to recover the proceeds of crime; provides the witness protection service for the state of Queensland; and conducts research on crime, policing or other relevant matters. Any changes to the legislation governing that body need to be the subject of rigorous assessment and evaluation and not at the whim of individuals or political parties with a particular agenda.

I have a particular concern about the proposed changes that would allow complaints to be made anonymously to the CCC. I have witnessed firsthand the devastating impact that an anonymous complaint to the CCC can have on an individual, and the recent spate of complaints to the CCC during the local government elections is further evidence of the dangers and potential impacts of allowing anonymous complaints to be made without any fear of repercussion. The use of the CCC as a political tool to smear an opponent is disgraceful and improper, and it is my firm opinion that those people who make vexatious and frivolous complaints to the CCC should be pursued and, if necessary, charged with making a false complaint. In fact, LGAQ CEO Greg Hallam recently said that the 2016 local government elections were the worst he has seen for this.

I do not support this bill because the PCCC is simultaneously undertaking a wider statutory review of the CCC's operations and is due to report to the House by 30 June 2016. It is my belief that any major structural reforms to the CCC should wait until after that review is finalised. Importantly, the changes proposed in the bill do not come from any independent review of the CCC. This is simply another example of undoing previous amendments made by the LNP government because this government has no plan other than to undo what we did in government. Advice from stakeholders during hearings is that a number of other issues were raised; for example, relating to corporate governance, the powers of commissioners, the chair, CEO and Parliamentary Commissioner and whether the CCC's functions in relation to crime and corruption should be carried out by separate entities. It is patently obvious that there are deeper and significant issues that will not be addressed by this particular bill, and

this simply adds weight to the argument that we should wait until the statutory review is completed. It defies logic that the government would seek to have this bill passed, when in two months time a full and comprehensive review is due to be delivered which in all probability will recommend significant changes to the Crime and Corruption Act.

In 2014 the former LNP government amended the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001 to put in place some of the recommendations from the review undertaken by former High Court judge Ian Callaghan and UQ law professor Nicholas Aroney, and we should give due recognition to the recommendations submitted by these learned gentlemen.

As a member of the PCCC I am privy to information regarding ongoing investigations, corruption in this state and growing issues such as paedophilia, which I am sure cause all of us in this chamber significant concern. We need to ensure that the CCC is adequately resourced, supported and has the level of expertise necessary to carry out its functions with minimal interference from this place. As our primary corruption-fighting body in Queensland the CCC plays a crucial role in keeping our state safe, and I only have to refer to the threat that outlaw motorcycle gangs pose to our citizens to reaffirm the importance of the work that the CCC performs. Consequently, it is vitally important that we get this right and not rush in for the sake of political expedience. The CCC should not be seen as a political football, and for that reason I urge all members here tonight to oppose this bill on the grounds that it makes practical sense to await the outcome of the statutory review of the CCC.