




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 15 May 2018

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (COUNCILLOR COMPLAINTS) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL
(IMPLEMENTING STAGE 1 OF BELCARRA) AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.02 pm): The LNP has been consistent in supporting the findings of the CCC's Operation Belcarra. We support the changes in the bill which implement its recommendations. These were recommendations for changing the local government electoral system, as Belcarra was an inquiry into local government. We need to be clear about that: the inquiry was into local government, not state government.

In my contribution to the debate I will focus on the Premier's extraordinary overreach and disregard for proper process when it comes to these laws. There is a pretty clear question for the Premier, who likes to say that she acts with integrity and accountability. Will the Premier accept the advice of the independent chair of the CCC, Alan MacSporran, or will the Premier ignore the CCC and ram through these laws which will fundamentally change our electoral system? Of course, this government has form when it comes to sneakily changing electoral laws. Who can forget that last term, with 18 minutes notice from the Premier—

Mrs D'Ath interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Is that a point of order?

Mrs D'Ath interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: No, just rumblings from those opposite.

Mr Minnikin: No, just inane rumblings, really.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I take that interjection. Of course, this government has form when it comes to sneakily changing electoral laws. Who can forget that last term, with 18 minutes notice, the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Attorney-General took our voting system back to the pre Fitzgerald inquiry era. In the public—

Mrs D'Ath interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Eighteen minutes. I know that those opposite do not like to remember that. They do not like to be open and accountable. This is a government that has fundamentally changed the electoral system.

Mr Janetzki interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I take that interjection from the shadow Attorney-General. In the public hearings for this bill Mr MacSporran was very clear on the property developer ban at the state level. He said—

... in one line in the early part of our report that the government may wish to consider translating or expanding it to the state sector. We did not mean by that that it is an automatic translation. What we meant is that it needs to be considered in that sector, which should be an evidence-gathering exercise, public consultation, sufficient to get a sense of what is really happening in that area.

He went on to say—

... you cannot simply automatically translate it without giving it due consideration.

I want to remind the House of a key promise the Premier broke last term. When she struck a minority government deal with the former member for Nicklin, the Premier promised an inquiry into state political donations. That has never happened. Despite reassuring Queenslanders that it was going to happen, it has never happened. That is a promise that was broken. Now we hear the independent chair of the CCC say that he does not think this donation ban should be transferred to the state without a proper investigation—in other words, the inquiry that the Premier squibbed on.

The question must be asked: why are the unions not considered to have undue influence over the Palaszczuk Labor government as a result of their donations and political support? We have had example after example of union heavies weighing in on how Queensland should be run under the Palaszczuk Labor government—from the reintroduction of the union encouragement policy, which gave unions carte blanche access to the personal details of public servants, to the direct contacts to not just the transport minister's mangocube email but also the private ministerial email of the Premier. I doubt Labor backbenchers even get that much access to their Premier! These examples—from handing over wish lists of how government policy should be changed to giving 'nudge-nudge, wink-wink' recommendations for board appointments—are completely unacceptable and expose the Labor Party's risk when it comes to good governance versus union donations.

I turn to the serious concerns we have with the implementation of these proposed laws. Through the committee public hearing process we heard a number of times from the department that it had no idea who would be included in the definitions of property developer in the bill. Instead, it referred all interpretation to the Electoral Commission. The ECQ made a written submission to the committee in which it raised very serious concerns that this government has simply not addressed. The ECQ said when it comes to implementing the procedures and policies associated with these proposed laws 'that 3-6 months would be suitable in this regard, with the preference for 6 months'.

We then saw the ECQ refuse to turn up to the committee's public hearing. It is quite extraordinary for the taxpayer funded agency that is implementing these laws to not front a public committee to explain how it intends to do it. The ECQ then agreed to attend a private hearing. That is not good enough. Queenslanders have the right to hear from the government about how these laws will work, how the ECQ intends to implement them and what processes are being developed to deal with these fundamental changes to our electoral laws.

Indeed, Bill Potts from the Queensland Law Society was of the view that it is unsatisfactory for an organisation such as the ECQ to be making these kinds of decisions without some form of guidance from parliament. The shadow minister for local government, the honourable member for Warrego, will be speaking in more detail about the changes to councillor complaints and conflict of interest procedures. With regard to the amendments this government is introducing regarding the powers of the minister to stand aside or dismiss councillors, we support any move to increase integrity in local government. We do have concerns about their execution and what is considered in the public interest. The shadow minister will speak further to our concerns during the consideration in detail stage.

As I conclude I want to state the question which goes to the heart of good governance in this state and the integrity of the Palaszczuk Labor government: will Anastacia Palaszczuk reject the advice of the head of Queensland's independent anti-corruption agency? If the Premier pushes ahead with these laws it will be an extraordinary move for a Labor government to ignore the CCC. That is something that all members in this House and this place should reflect on as we vote on these bills.