




Speech By
Michael Berkman

MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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ADJOURNMENT

Political Donations

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (7.16 pm): Today I rise to speak about a matter of deep concern in my community and central to the broad perception that our system is broken. In countless conversations while campaigning and since winning the seat of Maiwar, voters have told me that they feel they cannot trust politicians whose overpriced election campaigns are funded by vested interests. Concerns about the corrupting influence of political donations in government decision-making and setting policy are certainly not new and those concerns are particularly salient regarding the motivations of corporate political donors. Individuals or not-for-profit organisations might choose to support one politician or party on the basis of shared values, but for-profit corporations are essentially limited to pursuing a single value. Their stake is profit; their only value is the dollar.

Queenslanders understand this intuitively. They know corporations donate not for the good of us all but on the basis of self-interest. The recent work of the Crime and Corruption Commission and its report on Operation Belcarra acknowledged political donations as a key concern, stating that they increase the risk of corruption.

Ms LEAHY: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I seek your ruling in relation to whether this is anticipating debate on legislation currently before the House.

Mr SPEAKER: Member, I have sought advice from the Table Office and it appears that you are straying into areas of bills that are before the House, as well as a PCCC report. I caution you. I find that you will need to change your tack or I will sit you down.

Mr BERKMAN: I will turn to some evidence that came from the head of the CCC in a recent parliamentary inquiry.

Mr SPEAKER: Again, member, if it actually relates to the bill before the House I caution you not to stray into that area. If you cannot make a contribution that is not related to those matters then I will cease your contribution. If you would like some advice, I am happy to provide that to you.

Mr BERKMAN: I would make the point that I am trying to make a broader point about donations made by for-profit corporations as opposed to the specific subject matter of the bill that is before the House at the moment. Indeed, the evidence that I am talking about that was given by the commissioner himself was in relation to developer donations at large. I will quote Mr MacSporran. His evidence was that 'in an ideal world his personal view would be'—

Mr SPEAKER: I am receiving advice that you are still going to be infringing standing orders by continuing your contribution. It is my understanding you are referring to evidence to the committee which is unable to be spoken to.

Mr BERKMAN: I am content to move past anything that relates to the Belcarra bill itself and speak much more broadly about the powers of the government and the opposition as they relate to the PCCC. We know that together the government and the opposition, through the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee, could task the CCC to investigate the influence of all political donations across Queensland. I have no doubt that moving beyond just local government and shining a light on the influence of donations at the state level more broadly would find ample justification for broader reform.

This is not a big ask. If Labor and the LNP were serious about tackling corruption rather than pandering to vested interests there would be no hesitation in taking this step. I am tonight calling on the parliament to do so. If it will not, we as a community are left to ask serious questions about what it is our major parties are hiding. What nefarious relationships with political donors are they unwilling to bring into the light of day for real scrutiny? Queenslanders expect leadership from our Premier, our government and the opposition, and it is time that people's expectations were met.