




Speech By
Peter Russo
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (12.34 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Local Government Electoral (Implementing Stage 1 of Belcarra) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. What is clear from the CCC Belcarra report is that the regime of disclosure applying to local government elections did not go far enough. The CCC recommended that parliament go one step further and impose a ban on developer donations in local government. The thought that the Premier and this parliament would ban developer donations for local government while, at the same time, sanctioning the same donations to candidates for state parliament is ridiculous, but that is what the LNP is suggesting.

I am concerned that there is a significant deficiency in this legislation which I ask the Attorney-General to consider resolving as the government's integrity reform plan is implemented. I am concerned that the capacity remains for some political parties to use interstate entities or federal branches to launder developer donations or donations that they do not want to disclose. When a similar ban on developer donations was implemented in New South Wales we saw the New South Wales branch of the Liberal Party launder hundreds of thousands of dollars of donations through the Liberal Party of Australia, the Millennium Forum, the Free Enterprise Foundation or shelf companies run by Liberal ministerial staffers. Who could forget \$400,000 of donations, including developer donations, through Five By Eight Pty Ltd?

This does not apply to the Labor Party. The ALP has always disclosed donations of \$1,000 or more, regardless of legislative requirements. The Liberals are not the only ones engaged in this practice. The Australian Greens and the Queensland Greens have also been caught using the lax federal rules to avoid Queensland disclosure laws. In 2016, in the heat of a federal election, the Queensland Greens accepted four donations over three days—all from entities associated with Ian Melrose and the Optical Superstore group, all corporate entities with the same address and directors. I table an extract from the ECQ disclosure for the period 23 to 26 June 2016.

Tabled paper: Extract from Electoral Commission of Queensland website, report showing donations to Queensland Greens in 2016 [\[653\]](#).

It is pretty clear that the Queensland Greens were confecting an arrangement to receive \$40,000 from Ian Melrose and the Optical Superstore group, a disgruntled tenderer for the Defence optometry contract, by ensuring each of the donations was less than the \$13,500 disclosure limit. I table the 2015-16 Australian Electoral Commission disclosure of the Queensland Greens which does not disclose any of these four donations.

Tabled paper: Document, dated 20 October 2016, Political party Disclosure Return to AEC from Queensland Greens [\[654\]](#).

In the tabled ECQ extract members can see these donors clearly attempting to use the lax AEC laws to hide corporate donations. The hypocrisy of this is that, at the very same time, the Queensland Greens were campaigning for a state election on the basis of banning all corporate donations. When

these donations were uncovered by the *Courier-Mail* in November 2017, Greens lead candidate Amy MacMahon was unable to explain these tricky practices. I table a copy of the *Courier-Mail* article of 23 November 2017 titled 'Greens caught accepting corporate donations'.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 23 November 2017, titled 'Queensland election 2017: Greens caught accepting corporate donations' [\[655\]](#).

The real question for the Greens, and the deficiency in this legislation, is the way the Queensland Greens launder donations through the Australian Greens. I table a report from the ECQ disclosure portal showing donations made by the Australian Greens to the Queensland Greens.

Tabled paper: Extract from Electoral Commission of Queensland website, report showing donations to Queensland Greens from Australian Greens in 2016, 2017 and 2018 [\[656\]](#).

Since the commencement of real-time disclosure the Queensland Greens have taken \$180,902 in donations from the Australian Greens. As members can see from the tabled 2015-16 disclosure, the Australian Greens do not disclose donations of \$1,000 or more as required by the Queensland legislation but only donations that exceed the federal legislative threshold of \$13,500.

These donations from the Australian Greens to the Queensland Greens do not require any disclosure of the donor sources unless they exceed \$13,500. This means that we have no idea if there is more money from the Optical Superstore, corporate donations or other special interests in these donations. Who knows, and that is the point? The Greens do not disclose those donations and these questions remain unanswered. The Australian Greens also receive significant donations from gambling operator Duncan Turpie and the Optical Superstore. Were these donations on top of the \$50,000 in donations the Greens have already taken from the super-rich gambler Duncan Turpie despite his history of being pursued for tax evasion by the ATO?

I know that the member for Maiwar will be making a contribution to this debate, and when he does so he has some questions to answer. First, why would the Queensland Greens take four donations of \$10,000 over three days during the 2016 election from corporate entities related to the Optical Superstore group? Second, why does he accept donations from the Australian Greens which do not meet the \$1,000 disclosure limit of the Queensland law and do not accept his policies on corporate donations? Is this not the Greens political party exploiting this legislative loophole? Third, for all of the donations he has received from the Queensland Greens, who are the donors? Why does he not require the Australian Greens to disclose all of their donations to the standard that exists in Queensland legislation? If not, will he return the \$180,000 in donations received that do not comply with Queensland electoral legislation? Fourth, if he says all corporate donations should be banned, why does he accept donations from multimillionaires like Duncan Turpie and Graeme Wood? I look forward to the member for Maiwar's response and I commend the bills to the House.