




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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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 STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (3.03 pm): The first thing I would like to say is that I am disappointed that two important bills have been cognated for today's debate. Under our new standing orders, that means members have only five minutes per bill in which to speak. The committee has spent a lot over time and effort on these bills and a lot of people have had input into the matter, but now I only get five minutes to talk on each bill. Unfortunately, I will have to concentrate on the Belcarra bill because that is the one I have had quite a bit of experience with through my local government career. A lot of history comes through there.

We should not have had to cognate these bills. At the last sitting these bills were ready. They came to the House on 9 and 23 April respectively with report-back dates of 6 March for one and 15 February for the other. In other words, they were pushed through at the report stage, yet now we have to push them through today because last week's debate on vegetation management went on and on, with Labor Party speakers repeating exactly the same thing over and over again. They repeated exactly what they had been told to parrot as per the printed speeches they had in the House. Most of them would not have even seen places where vegetation clearing will affect the property owners concerned.

I return to the bill that has resulted from Mr MacSporran's inquisition into concerns, as was reported in this House, about the local government elections of 2016. There was no corruption found in that inquiry by Mr MacSporran into the 2016 elections. It was yet another inquiry, and the Gold Coast city featured prominently in the matter. As per usual, they always run down to the poor old Gold Coast city for an inquiry. I think this is the third one that I have been witness to and, again, no corruption was found. However, Mr MacSporran said there is a perception out there that there might be corruption.

I can assure members in this House that the perception of corruption at the moment in the courts and the media—and I will not be talking about individual cases—is all about corrupt activity. It was corrupt when Gordon Nuttall was working here for the Labor Party—and Russ Hinze and George Herscu—and it is corrupt now. We did not need this Belcarra legislation to entrap those people who behaved badly in local government. What we do need is an efficient and effective investigative group to actually catch them and bring them to justice, as is currently happening. That corrupt conduct that was happening is being dealt with at this moment. We do not need this bill, which is basically another political ploy by the Labor Party to attack the group that support, in the main, the LNP because of our philosophies—and some of them are my good friends.

Basically this legislation says to me—and I see the member for Maryborough laughing. He does not have any friends. The bottom line is that he should not be laughing at anything. The donations made by my good friends, who have donated to the LNP and to my mayoralty campaigns in the past, are all

out there and have been accounted for. The fact is they donated to the Labor Party as well. I can name them if you want, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I will not for the sake of brevity. The fact is they were major donors to the Labor Party. What this legislation and the Labor Party are doing is saying they were corrupt; they were only donating to the Labor Party to get special favours. That is what this legislation says. That is what the Labor Party is saying here in this House today: developers are corrupt. That is not the case. The corruption that we are seeing, that has been found and that is being dealt with in the courts now is corrupt activity. It is not through political donations; it is for matters being kept quiet.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McArdle): Member, please just be careful of the sub judice rule.

Mr STEVENS: I know you are a lawyer, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I am being very careful.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just be careful, thank you.

Mr STEVENS: I have not mentioned anyone in particular or any case in particular or anything whatsoever. In general, it is well known that there have been alleged corrupt practices and they are being addressed by the courts at this time. Those practices would be picked up anyway without this legislation. This is purely a political ploy.

'The Fox', the good Terry Mackenroth, would be proud of this legislation. He had very similar legislation brought into the House in terms of local government members not being able to stand for state parliament for the very purpose that this side of the House has a lot of its members gleaned from local government. Obviously they are business community members in local government and they step from there to our side of politics. There are one or two over there. Most of the ones on the other side of the House come through the union movement or ministerial offices and have no real experience in terms of local government matters. What Terry did for political advantage was try to ban those people from running for state parliament. The bills before the House today are clearly aimed at the Brisbane City Council, but an add-on—not by Mr MacSporran but by the Palaszczuk Labor government—is the state government.

To be honest, this legislation would not have been before the House while Jim Soorley was the Labor Lord Mayor collecting bucketloads of money from developers. I did not hear cries of corrupt activity or perceptions of wrongdoing when Jim Soorley was Lord Mayor collecting millions of dollars from the development community around Brisbane for the Labor campaign, so there is a track record. Unfortunately for them, Labor has not been in power in Brisbane City Council for a long, long time.

This legislation quite clearly is aimed at hobbling the LNP and its major supporters who have helped the LNP in local government elections. It is wrong, wrong, wrong to say that just because developers want to donate to a particular party with a particular philosophy they are doing so for a corrupt purpose or to gain favour. This could be easily solved. If the government had come in here and said, 'Any councillor who receives a developer's donation cannot vote on any of the developer's applications before a council,' that would have been the answer to the problem and it would have been finished, full stop. You could not argue with that.

The LNP has always supported openness and accountability. I have developer friends who have been happy to donate to me and my campaign because of my philosophy on go-forward communities. I was a pro-developer councillor, and that was well known. I am not ashamed of any of those people. There was no corrupt activity. I could give you many instances where I was happy to say no to any proposed development that was not in the interests of our community—which we were there to serve—and I did. I have a classic example, but I cannot tell you about that in 10 minutes. It is a bit too short.

The inquiry that we had was an absolute farce in terms of Mr MacSporran telling us that it was all about perception. It did not find any corruption. Basically, the only thing it found was the matter of a perjury case that is now before the courts. We cannot talk about that, but I did raise this matter in the House. It is on the parliamentary record, so people can just check my speeches—they are really good reading—and see what brought the matter of the mayoral campaign on the Gold Coast to the attention of the CCC. That person is now dealing with the CCC.

During the inquiry the department of local government officers could not tell us what constituted a developer. This legislation is so wishy-washy and oblique that it has no support from departmental officers. They said, 'Just go and ask the ECQ what a developer is.' I saw one wandering around the streets the other day. He had feathers on! They had no clue whatsoever how this matter was going to be determined. They were asked, 'Are consultants developers?' They said, 'No, they are not developers, but go and ask the ECQ.' This legislation is a sham. It is an embarrassment to the government. It was brought in for one reason only: to try to stop support from one particular section of the community that knows the LNP does a better job for the growth and development of Queensland than the Labor Party can ever do. They are hobbling one side of politics, and I will not even speak about union donations. Hopefully with a new government we will have a look at this in a different light.

(Time expired)