




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

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**CRIME AND CORRUPTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (6.22 pm): I rise to add a brief contribution to the Crime Corruption and Other Legislation Amendment Bill before us. I am not a lawyer of any kind—commercial or criminal—but I am a businessperson. What I know is that when a society has corrupt behaviour, when appointments to various boards and government agencies are made on the basis of nepotism, favouritism or corrupt conduct, business loses confidence in Queensland. People who want to invest their money in our state need to make sure that we have—

**Mr Bailey** interjected.

**Mr WATTS:** You really want me to start in on you, Minister? I am more than happy to have the discussion with the minister.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Stewart): Order! Direct your comments through the chair.

**Mr WATTS:** I will take the minister's interjections. I was not specifically talking about the minister's behaviour, which, by any measure, would be seen as very suspect—in fact, by the CCC seen as foolish. With this change of definition would it be considered corrupt?

The objectives of the bill are to widen the definition of 'corrupt conduct' and to implement the recommendations of report No. 97 of the Parliamentary Crime and Commission Committee titled *Review of the Crime and Corruption Commission* and report No. 99 titled *Report on a complaint by Mr Darren Hall*. The definition of 'corrupt conduct' is proposed to be widened by removing the requirement that corrupt conduct be engaged for the benefit of or detriment to a person. We certainly know that there was some benefit to some people with the minister's actions, don't we? It also proposes to remove the list of offences that could be corrupt conduct and replace them with a second limb defining corrupt conduct.

Corrupt conduct may now include such things as collusive tendering, fraud in relation to applications for a licence, permit or authority—it is not fraud in relation to applications for board appointments, unfortunately—or dishonestly obtaining a benefit from the payment or application of public funds. I will say that again: dishonestly obtaining a benefit from the payment or application of public funds. I would be interested to know whether the board appointments made via the mango cube application method are getting paid. If they are, one could say that they are certainly suspect and they are certainly receiving public funds. Corrupt conduct may also include the disposition of state assets, evading a state tax, levy or duty or fraudulently obtaining and retaining a government appointment. I will repeat that: fraudulently obtaining or retaining a government appointment.

I would be interested to know—and again I am not a lawyer so I might need to seek help from the member for Toohy—what 'fraudulently obtaining' means. If there was no application process and if nobody is consulted then was there a level of fraud? If there was not a level of fraud then I wonder if everybody in the bar at my local Fitzy's pub could have the email address where they send their applications for one of these plum government jobs.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr WATTS:** I am curious as to what the current address is because obviously that one has had to be shut down. There has been a little bit too much public scrutiny on that one.

**Mr Bailey** interjected.

**Mr WATTS:** I hear the minister squawking away over there, protesting his innocence. I think he does protest just a little bit too much. He knows that his behaviour at the very best is incredibly borderline. Everybody else in Queensland knows where the campaign funding comes from and knows where his mates come from. It is all union money. They get a backdoor entry into plum government jobs paid out of the taxpayers' purse.

Let me come back to the bill. What is the bill about? The bill is about making sure the people of Queensland have confidence that there is not corrupt conduct. I am happy to go for a walk down the street with the minister in Toowoomba any day of the week and we will do a vox pop as to whether they think his behaviour is corrupt.

The facts of the matter are that the people of Queensland did not have the ability to be able to apply for those jobs, particularly after applications closed. They did not have the ability to get recommended for a job they did not apply for. The minister made sure that his union mates and friends of his union mates got the plum jobs to run Queensland on behalf of the people of Queensland.

We all pay our tax, we all run our businesses, we have employment and we do all these things. We need some public administration. What this bill is about is making sure that we have confidence in that public administration. When we have someone in a leadership position in this state setting this low standard—a standard that would not pass for the appointment of a P&C president—of allowing someone to apply after applications close, everybody knows that if this does meet the definition of 'corrupt conduct' then we should be changing the definition.

We are here changing it. We are broadening it. If it does not capture the behaviour that this minister has exhibited in this place then it should be broader. I am happy to have taken the minister's interjections. He has made me talk about a few things that I was not planning on talking about. It does show that in the fight against corruption in this state we cannot rest.

The Attorney-General said that this is about ensuring that we serve all Queenslanders, not the privileged few. I wonder whether all Queenslanders received an email to apply for those jobs after applications were closed or whether it was in fact only the privileged few that the Attorney-General referred to.

In order to fight corruption in this state, where possible these things should be open and accountable. Obviously not everything can be discussed openly by the CCC, but they need strong legislation. They need legislation that is fit for purpose and that is capable of doing the job. I put it to members that, if we go for a walk down any street and ask people what they think, they would see the minister's behaviour as not meeting the standard. The legislation should capture that.

The second part is that the CCC need the resources. One of the implications of broadening this definition is that there will be a lot more captured. The CCC has to try to work out how to prioritise and deal with cost blowouts and time blowouts. The other thing I know, coming from business, about corruption is that if it is not dealt with quickly then it makes it really hard if you want to mortgage your house and invest in a business. If you think someone else might be able to get favourable terms that are available to you, you are going to go, 'I won't make that deal.'

It has been reported widely in the media that the CFMEU has a shocking history on this. In the past 18 months the union's Queensland branch has been hit with fines totalling \$2.4 million after losing 10 cases brought by the Australian Building and Construction Commission. What do you think that does to the businesses that are running construction works here in Queensland, when the CFMEU blatantly ignores the laws and funds the people who write the laws who then come into this place and will not hold the CFMEU accountable? Anyone in the construction industry is terrified of what the CFMEU can do to their profitability and their bottom line through its illegal behaviour throughout Queensland. The Attorney-General does not want to deal with it in any way at all.

There were plenty of other matters to do with nepotism, the bad culture of the Labor government and the way they are running government, but I am out of time.

*(Time expired)*