




Speech By
Corrine McMillan

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL (IMPLEMENTING STAGE 2 OF
BELCARRA) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

ELECTORAL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (12.56 pm): In respect to the member for Traeger's comments, one must understand that with greater autonomy comes increased accountability. One cannot have increased autonomy without increased accountability. I rise today to make my contribution to the debate on the Electoral and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 and the Local Government Electoral (Implementing Stage 2 of Belcarra) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, hereafter referred to as the bill. The bill was made in response to the Crime and Corruption Commission's report titled *Operation Belcarra: a blueprint for integrity and addressing corruption risk in local government*. This report was informed by numerous complaints received regarding the conduct of the candidates for the Gold Coast City Council, the Moreton Bay Regional Council and the Ipswich City Council. Importantly, the bill contains significant reforms informed by the report's recommendations that seek to improve the integrity, transparency and public accountability of the state's electoral system. Building on the Palaszczuk government's strong record of enhancing electoral integrity, transparency and accountability in Queensland, the bill aims to further strengthen public confidence in our electoral system which, as we know, is a key democratic institution.

I commend the government for implementing these measures and make comment particularly on the bill's reflection of the Belcarra report and its inclusion of recommendation 31 and recommendation 6. Primarily, recommendation 31 expands ECQ's statutory functions to include administering and promoting compliance with the election funding and financial disclosure provisions of the Electoral Act 1992 and corresponding provisions of the Local Government Electoral Act 2011. This recognises the critical role of the ECQ in monitoring and enforcing compliance with the election funding and financial disclosure requirements, which are key to the integrity, transparency and accountability of the electoral system. Furthermore, this measure will be complemented by the amendment of existing and the introduction of new offence and penalty provisions. These reforms will improve consistency among our state electoral laws and will promote compliance.

In particular, this bill creates an offence where a person knowingly publishes false information about gifts made to a candidate in an election, a registered political party or a third party with a maximum penalty of 20 units. In addition, the bill increases the penalty applicable to third parties who knowingly lodge a false return about donations given to candidates from 50 penalty units to 100. These penalty reforms are particularly crucial to reducing corrupt behaviour within the state's electoral system as they disincentivise unethical behaviour by Queensland representative candidates and associated third parties.

Secondly, recommendation 6 of the Belcarra report is implemented in the bill through the insertion of new section 260B. New section 260B requires an entity making a gift or loan to a registered political party or candidate over or equal to \$1,000 to notify the recipient of the true source of the gift or loan.



Ms McMILLAN: Failure to comply with this requirement is an offence with a maximum penalty of 20 penalty units. This requirement also applies to an entity making a gift to third parties who incur expenditure for political purposes. As a result of this new section, intermediaries will be prevented from circumventing existing disclosure requirements, which play an important role in ensuring the transparency and accountability of Queensland's electoral system. This higher threshold requirement means that corrupt behaviour, such as political figures accepting bribes, will be addressed.

Lastly, I turn to the aspect of the bill that addresses the completion of a mandatory training program prior to nominating as a candidate. One cannot be expected to be paid as a professional, to be addressed as a professional and to be respected as a professional if one does not possess the required education, skills, knowledge and understanding of the responsibilities and accountabilities that come with that role. There is no other role in the Public Service where a highly paid employee is not required to follow clear processes and standards associated with expenditure, budgeting and acquittal, that is, to be accountable for their decisions and their actions. It is high time that those opposite moved into the 21st century and acknowledged that selflessness, service, integrity, capacity and competency are highly advantageous qualities in a leader. Interestingly, much research over many decades has debated whether those qualities can, in fact, be taught or nurtured.

The Palaszczuk government strongly believes that the promotion of transparency within the electoral system is vital to our democracy. The key to any efficient and effective democracy is its ability to disincentivise blatant corrupt behaviour. Through its implementation of recommendations 31 and 6, the bill achieves this objective through introducing higher threshold requirements for financial disclosure and donation disclosure respectively. I congratulate the minister and thank the staff of the local government department. I commend the bills to the House.