



Speech By  
**Daniel Purdie**


**MEMBER FOR NINDERRY**

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

### **ELECTORAL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (11.46 am) continuing: We can all now breathe a sigh of relief knowing that the Labor Party has now ditched its cynical plan to force CPV on councils. Last night I spoke of how Winston Churchill famously said that preferential voting had the potential to make winners out of losers. He was also wise enough to warn of the perils of ignoring the mistakes of the past. His sage advice about learning from our mistakes has clearly been lost on this government.

At the 2017 state election when the Labor Party introduced compulsory preferential voting the rate of informal voting more than doubled to 4.34 per cent. As we all know, this major voting change was made in an arrogant and deceptive way: late at night with only 18 minutes notice and no public consultation or consideration whatsoever. In stark contrast, in 2010-11 the British government held a national referendum to change its first-past-the-post voting system to a preferential voting system. The UK media and political experts at the time cited Australia as an example and condemned our CPV voting system as corrupt. UK voters overwhelmingly rejected the change.

A review instigated by a key recommendation of the Fitzgerald report also raised concerns about CPV. If Labor had progressed its ill-thought-out plan to reintroduce CPV in this bill, the cost of upcoming local government elections would have skyrocketed from \$17.2 million to \$27.4 worth of taxpayers' money as a result of the unnecessary reform. How could Labor even consider such an expense, which had no direct benefit to taxpayers?

We know that taxpayers want investment in education, policing and health services. They want jobs, safe and livable communities, better roads and public transport—not millions wasted on changing the voting system for the sole benefit of one political party over another. This begs the question: what was the reason for imposing these unwelcome changes? No reason has come from any camp advising on reform, including the CCC or the Soorley report—just a Labor camp hell-bent on winning council wards in Brisbane with the help of its mates, the Greens. Speaking of their Labor mates, we know that Labor would not subject their union comrades to CPV because most unions adopt an optional preferential voting system. If optional preferential voting were currently a threat to the integrity and transparency of local government elections the Belcarra report would have recommended that change.

I understand that the conflict of interest provision was removed from this bill yesterday, so basically the two major reforms initially outlined in this bill have now been removed. I look forward to further recommendations in relation to Belcarra coming before the House in the next few months.

Another concern raised by the Queensland Law Society and shared by the LNP is that the revised legislation reverses the onus of proof with the presumption of knowledge of particular gifts or loans. The new Electoral and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 proposes changes to the time provided for postal votes, which extends the time limit from an unrealistic two days to 12 days, which is more than

the recommendation in the independent panel's report. This bill also opens up voting to prisoners who are serving a sentence of three years or less. The LNP does not support this. Once again, this is a Labor construct and one that has not been recommended in any integrity report.

I note a number of anomalies in changes to the relationship between the bureaucracy and elected representatives that apply under these new laws to local government and not the state—for example, requests for information, the overreach of powers afforded to the Office of the Independent Assessor, and changes to caretaker provisions impeding councils from adopting their planning schemes, placing strain on all involved.

Creating legislation does not automatically result in a fair and transparent process. The Office of the Independent Assessor is under-resourced and unable to clear the current councillor complaint workload. In the spirit of integrity, I ask this government to just get on with doing its job in implementing all of the Belcarra recommendations so they can be understood and implemented by March 2020. I believe the only ideology that should be compulsory and preferential is for us to work together with our local governments and taxpayers to ensure we have a clear, fair local election process for March 2020.