



Speech By  
**Linus Power**


**MEMBER FOR LOGAN**

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

**ELECTORAL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (4.24 pm): I was really disappointed by the contribution of the member for Toowoomba South. We are dealing with important issues of integrity in our local governments and our voting system. The idea that when all semblance of substance had faded the member for Toowoomba South should simply turn to abusive partisan comment is really what is wrong with some of the debate that has gone on. It is typical and it is disappointing. We can do so much better. I welcome the return of the deputy chair because I know that in the committee, of which I was the chair, we did so much more work in interrogating these difficult issues for which there are many sides and different opinions, but that is what we sought to do.

The committee did determine, as recommendation 1, that the Local Government Electoral (Implementing Stage 2 of Belcarra) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 be passed. In our report we attempted with clarity to put forward all points of view, including those that were alternative, or indeed those that opposed the government's view, or indeed those that were alternative or opposed even my own view and no doubt the view of the member for Mermaid Beach. This is in stark contrast to what we saw under the Newman government. If we listened to the member for Warrego or the member for Toowoomba South, we know that it is in stark contrast to any future LNP government.

They are not interested in the committee process. They are not interested in hearing alternative views, much less acting on alternative views. They are not interested in hearing new facts and new directions, much less acting on those new facts and new directions. Instead of listening, the member for Toowoomba South and the member for Warrego would, very much like the Newman government, bluster and bully their way through, regardless of the facts and new information.

When it comes to the tough job of reform of our local government sector, it is clear that the LNP are simply not up to it. They are not up to this difficult task of balancing competing priorities. For them there is no problem. They say, 'There is nothing to see here.' Even worse, they plainly deny that some of the changes that they made in their time in government have contributed to these integrity issues. I note the good grace of the minister in not emphasising, in my humble opinion, nearly enough and going through root and branch the detail of concerns that those changes made to the process of integrity within local government. To spare their blushes and to be kind to them, it is a bipartisan view. Some of these reforms are vitally important to ensure integrity and to overcome some of the weaknesses that were introduced.

Rather than wilful blindness of these integrity issues, pretending that there is nothing to see here or partisan rants, as in the member for Toowoomba South, the member for Warrego went further. The member for Warrego wilfully omitted and distorted some of the arguments. That is not to say that there are not differences of opinions and differing views on these matters. When you seek to wilfully distort

the argument, it shows that you have nothing of substance to put towards the debate. Instead, you wish to obfuscate, distract, distort and run a partisan campaign rather than get to the bottom of the integrity issues in local government. I will give one example of the disappointing and frankly deliberate misleading of this House.

The member for Warrego quoted a Labor Party submission on full preferential voting which stated that the Labor Party felt that there should be first-past-the-post in local government elections. I thought, and I am sure the member for Mermaid Beach thought, that that was not a submission to our inquiry. We did not hear that. I found out that she was talking about a submission in 1991 and the statement was in comparison to first-past-the-post—a system of voting that we all believe is completely and inherently undemocratic.

I would not put it past some members of the LNP to want to go back to the 1890s and first-past-the-post voting. I notice that the member for Chatsworth is smiling; he is thinking about it. Does it wilfully distort the argument? Why do you need to not allow people to know you are talking about a 1991 submission which compared systems? The member for Warrego falsely stated that the minister said this was all about Belcarra. She set up the false premise that this was all about Belcarra, and then she suddenly revealed that some of the things are not about Belcarra. However, let us remember that in the minister's second reading speech he went to great lengths to say that this is not just about Belcarra. It is also in the explanatory notes. It is complex. The minister did it in a tricky spot: on the front page. I remember that the minister, in his second reading speech, said that setting it up to be just about Belcarra was exactly what he attempted not to do. Dot point No. 3 states clearly there are other significant reforms not from Belcarra, so why do we have false statements in order to confuse and obfuscate the issue? Because they do not want to deal with the serious issues.

Integrity is really important to us in local government. We respect the work that local governments do. We want to strengthen them. We want to give them the opportunity to do more good work for members of parliament. We also note that when it comes to obfuscating the member for Toowoomba North went even further, pretending that integrity issues are somehow a partisan thing. I am from the electorate of Logan. I could make extraordinarily partisan points about Logan local government and the participation of certain people in certain political parties which the member for Toowoomba South knows very well, but that would be an attempt to not address the central issues.

This bill attempts to address the second Belcarra recommendation: the real-time disclosure of electoral expenditure. Those opposite said that was not worth passing recommendations 3 and 4, the disclosure of candidate interests as a condition of nomination, apparently the LNP said, 'Nothing to see here' and that these were not worth passing. In relation to recommendations 5 and 6, record of membership and behaviour of groups of candidates, the member for Toowoomba South said, 'There is nothing worth passing in those.' Everyone should recognise that is the opinion of the LNP. There are many things contained on page 5 of our report that are essential and effective in changing the nature of local government.

I also want to speak directly to the issues. As a committee we sought alternate views, dissenting views and supporting views. Unlike the Newman government—and from what we have heard today, unlike any future LNP government—I admire a government that says, 'We have not convinced people of the whole totality of our decisions. We put forward our views and ideas, but we need to take people with us.' This government and this committee process should be given credit. I would like to see members of our committee recognised because we did one of the early teleconferences to hear the views of regional mayors who got together in Townsville, including Mayor Jenny Hill. They did not agree with us on these issues. They did not agree with recommendations 7 and 21, 'deeming election participants and councillors to have knowledge of the original source of electoral gifts or loans'. They said there are complexities with regard to that. We absorbed that information and took on board those complexities. They did not agree with compulsory preferential voting. They put forward a variety of views about the differences between local, state and federal governments.

Lastly, we know that the LNP is going to speak against prisoners voting. If they put forward a different time period you could give that some credibility, but they speak against our Constitution, they speak against court decisions and they also speak against what the federal government and the Morrison government—

*(Time expired)*