




Speech By
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HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (2.34 pm): I rise to oppose the Human Rights Bill before this House. To start I want to quote former New South Wales Labor premier Bob Carr—

Parliaments are elected to make laws. In doing so, they make judgements about how the rights and interests of the public should be balanced. Views will differ in any given case about whether the judgment is correct. However, if the decision is unacceptable, the community can make its views known at regular elections.

...

A bill of rights is an admission of the failure of parliaments, governments and the people to behave in a reasonable, responsible and respectful manner.

We have to ask ourselves: why are we here? Which are the human rights that are not being upheld in our system at the moment? To think that these 86 pages will fix any failings in the common law and the thousand years of Westminster parliamentary system is, frankly, a little arrogant. It is a little arrogant to suggest that the common law that has been built up across Westminster based democracies across the Western world and passed on to us in Queensland as one of our greatest legacies for stable government should be overridden by 86 pages of this government.

Not for the first time will we find this House being overlorded by unelected elites. In this case, after this bill is passed the unelected elite will be a collection of lawyers or former lawyers, so only people who have that training would be able to make judgement as to whether someone's human rights are being protected or not—not an elected member, not someone who has listened to the people in their electorate and come here to be their strong voice and ensure that their concerns and their rights and their obligations are heard in this place, but someone who is unelected and is an elite. In 1922, nearly 100 years ago, there was another room in this building that had an unelected elite—it was a squattocracy—and they were appointed by the Governor. The Governor would put the people in there and they would look at the legislation that came out of this room—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stevens): Pause the clock. Members on my right, there is far too much conversation. If you want to make a contribution, please put yourself on the list or otherwise please hear the member in silence.

Mr WATTS: They are probably worried about the guillotine—that is why they are interjecting and talking now—because they know that they will not be able to get on the list. There was a House here that overruled legislation that was passed by the democratically elected people of Queensland in this chamber, and they were the appointed elite. The Labor Party then—when it stood for something rather than fell for everything—decided to get rid of that House because it did not want to be overlorded by an elite. It wanted to make sure the people's voice could be heard. That is what it did in 1922 and today, with these 86 pages, it brings back the ability to be overlorded in this House and I think that that is a shame.

Bob Carr spoke about several things, including good government. Ultimately, good government will come from a robust parliament and it will come from an incorruptible judiciary, and our judiciary does a good job of interpreting the laws that come out of this place. What it should not be able to do is

say to us, 'No, we don't think that law really fits in with what we're thinking, so can you do it again, please?' It should not be able to do that. We need a sceptical media and we need an executive that is willing to be held to account by this parliament, yet what we find with this executive is that it does not like being held to account. It chops debate. It guillotines us so that we cannot talk. It will not listen to anybody and then it has the temerity to come into this place and suggest that others have been arrogant. Nothing is more arrogant than the members opposite chopping debate on legislation on every occasion they possibly can to ram their agenda through this place, including delivering us some 86 pages that will enable overlords to reject what this House has done—a House that is democratically elected by the people of Queensland. We need good government to protect people's human rights.

Out of the past 30 years, we have had 25 years of Labor government. The reason people in Queensland are worried about their human rights is that Labor has been useless at protecting them. Members can go down to the Brisbane watch house right now and ask the eight-year-olds and 10-year-olds who are locked up in cells there—they are of the same design as a detention unit in a prison—if their human rights are being protected by this government. It has failed to provide adequate facilities for them to be secured when they have offended. Members can go to our prisons right now and ask prisoners who are double bunked whether their human rights are being protected.

We hear this conversation about how we are going to protect people's human rights. The government has the capacity to do that now, but it chooses other priorities, such as grabbing the name of Lady Cilento and tearing it down, rather than putting some of the money spent on that into making sure that little eight-year-old and 10-year-old Aboriginals are not locked up in the equivalent of a detention unit at the Brisbane watch house. Shame on the members opposite for coming into this place and suggesting that they are ready to protect people's human rights, because they are not.

It also takes good governance to protect people's human rights, which means that we need a government that is willing to listen, that is willing to be held to account. The government members opposite have not listened to anybody. How on earth are they going to protect people's human rights with these 86 pages? We need a sceptical media that understands that the government members opposite are incompetent at delivering on their own desires. I do not take away at all that the members opposite want to protect people's human rights. I am sure they do, but they are so incompetent at managing the budget that they are not capable of protecting people's human rights because they do not have the financial resources left to be able to deliver that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. There is far too much conversation between ministers and members on my left. It will cease and we will hear the member and we will all be informed. You will get your opportunity to talk at another time. Please cease. That is a warning for members.

Mr WATTS: Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you. Members might not all get the opportunity to speak, because we know that the debate has already been guillotined. I apologise to those members who want to speak for taking my full 10 minutes. We need a fourth estate that is willing to take a serious look at this government and not listen to what it says, but look at what it does, how it behaves and how it treats people. The members opposite sit in this place and say, 'We have to look after these people. We don't want 17-year-olds locked up in an adult prison.' At the moment they have eight-year-olds locked up in an adult watch house. They are in a room with no yard and they have no opportunity to get outside. The members opposite should be taking a serious look at what they are doing to the lives of those young children. They may have offended, but they have not been found guilty yet. They deserve to be accommodated better than they are. For over 25 years we have seen Labor's failure of good government. The members opposite want to bring 86 pages in here about how to overlord the democracy of Queensland—to have someone else deciding what rights we will have protected, when and how.

I mention one submitter to the bill, Stewy Worth, of Odin's Warriors Motorcycle Club. He submitted that he is very happy about this legislation, but he is also concerned that it will cause him to be in breach of the Serious and Organised Crime Legislation Amendment Act because he wants to be able to wear his colours when he goes outside. I am pretty sure the reason members of Odin's Warriors want to wear their colours when they go outside is so that they can intimidate people, deal their drugs and take away people's human rights. That is what the organised motorcycle gangs did in Queensland. When we brought in legislation that talked about their association and the intimidatory clothes they wear, they left and went to another state. They are back. If the members opposite are not sure about that, they should check with someone down the coast who got a bullet hole in them yesterday.

This legislation will deliver to this House overlords of democracy. The people of Queensland will not be able to have their say, because the people who they vote to represent them in this House will be told, 'No, I'm sorry. That is not compatible with what we think.' Those overlords are unelected. They are an elite. The Labor Party once stood for something. Now it will fall for anything.

(Time expired)