




Speech By
Corrine McMillan

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 17 June 2020

ELECTORAL AND OTHER LEGISLATION (ACCOUNTABILITY, INTEGRITY AND OTHER MATTERS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (6.56 pm): I rise to share my contribution to the Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Amendment Bill 2019. Queenslanders must be able to have confidence in our electoral system as a key feature of our democracy. At the heart of our democracy in the western world is the right to continually challenge those who hold or seek to hold absolute power in our society, whether these be banks, media empires, politicians, large corporations or those with unlimited access to money, because it is this imbalance of power that leads to world poverty, poor health, suppressed educational outcomes, reduces life expectancy and ultimately to the widening gap between the rich and poor in the western world and globally.

One's life experience and opportunities should not be the result of the postcode in which one was born or the abhorrent misuse of power in our communities—an abhorrent misuse of power that Queenslanders know all too well. Long before the election of the Bligh government Labor governments sought to challenge the abhorrent practices of consecutive Bjelke-Petersen governments. For 19 years from 1968 to 1987 under Bjelke-Petersen's leadership Queensland was not democratic. In fact, Queensland bordered on an authoritarian state. Allegations of organised crime and police corruption in Queensland were first aired on *Four Corners* in May 1987. The Bjelke-Petersen government manipulated and exploited the state's electoral constituency's boundaries so as to favour one party with an over-representation of rural electorates at the expense of urban ones. The state's unicameral parliament meant that the checks and balances a second house would have provided were absent.

This era of government was brought to a dramatic and inglorious end 19 years later with the Fitzgerald inquiry into police corruption. While the Fitzgerald reforms commenced 30 years ago, the project of ensuring the integrity of our democracy is an ongoing task. Electoral reform is a task—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms MCMILLAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, they do not like it. Electoral reform is a task that the Palaszczuk government remains committed to. It was the Bligh government in 2009 that began discussions to elevate Queensland's political donation restrictions and reporting requirements to best practice, introducing the Electoral Reform and Accountability Act in 2011 which imposed electoral expenditure caps and donation caps for state elections of \$1,000. Not surprisingly, this act was subsequently repealed by the incoming Newman government. Newman's 2014 changes to donation laws enabled donors to give large amounts—up to \$12,400—in secret as well as exploiting the gap between what is legally a donation and a fee for a good or a service.

However, on 17 April 2019 the High Court published orders in the matter of *Spence v State of Queensland* [2019] HCA 15, declaring the Commonwealth provisions that would have limited the scope for the state to legislate for changes to electoral campaigning financing framework invalid and upholding the validity of Queensland's prohibition on property developer donations. This was further evidence that the Palaszczuk government's electoral reforms are reforms reflective of good governing. The electoral bill amends the Electoral Act 1992 to provide for electoral expenditure caps for registered political parties and their associated entities.