




Speech By  
**James Lister**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

---

Record of Proceedings, 4 February 2020

**ELECTORAL LEGISLATION (POLITICAL DONATIONS) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (6.17 pm): It will come as no surprise to the members of the House that I do not share much in common politically with the member for Maiwar, although I get along well with him man to man. I have to say that his second reading speech on the bill was a tedious, moralising lecture. To my ears, it spoke about all of the hypocrisy that we see from the radical left. We heard the member for Mermaid Beach describe it as grandstanding and I think that captured it pretty well.

What this bill misses is that the trade union movement is able to continue to donate to the party of its choice, the Labor Party, with relative impunity. In his speech, the member for Maiwar said that the Labor Party needs to get away from its corporate donors. That misses the point. In fact, the productive part of the economy is probably pretty upset with the Queensland Labor Party because of its stewardship of the Queensland economy, so I cannot see them sprinting to the Labor Party donations desk to fill its coffers. However, the trade union movement is another matter.

We have seen some very unedifying spectacles, such as the mangocube debacle, where we had a little window into what is perhaps happening every day to those who sit on the treasury benches of the government—that is, trade union bosses who have contributed large amounts of money to the Labor Party having direct and, in some cases, undisclosed—perhaps, in many cases, undisclosed—access to ministers of the Crown and thereby exercising undisclosed influence on the government. In any other context, it simply would not be tolerated for a donor to call the government, demanding, ‘We want this done’, ‘We want that person appointed’, ‘We want this legislation’, but that is what happens day to day.

If the member for Maiwar and the Greens are serious about eliminating undue influence from our government, elections and so forth then they would not be excluding donations by the trade union movement from the bill. The Greens speak as though they are the little party and they need to have an easier landscape in which to compete with the major parties. I would say to the Greens that they almost entirely represent affluent electorates. Their membership and support base is not so much a hippie with dreadlocks in a kombivan at the beach anymore. It is a professional living in a leafy suburb close to the centre of Brisbane. They as individuals have the money to contribute large amounts to their party.

Whenever we introduce a measure which favours one side of politics over another in terms of their ability to raise money we skew the electoral landscape. We nobble the opposition, which has a job to do in holding the government to account and competing in elections. This bill, which in many ways resembles the government’s bill—that is, to clamp down on the election donations of their political opponents—will achieve just that.

I was listening to the member for Pine Rivers when she spoke in this debate. She talked about the perceived or actual risk of wrongdoing associated with donations in the local government context when it comes to developments and so forth. I notice that she did not mention any possibility of that occurring at the state level. I must say that I agree with the member for Pine Rivers in that sense because neither did the CCC. Their investigations did not reveal that there was a propensity for

donations from developers to influence developments at a local level, which is where they occur in Queensland. This bill, just like the Labor Party's bill, would also deny political parties the opportunity to be given support by those who want that party to be elected.

It is a very slippery slope to say to individuals, 'You do not have the right to support the party of your choice and to provide them with assistance to be elected in order to provide the governance that you want.' That is a very slippery slope. The LNP's opponents, the Labor Party, are extremely well funded by the trade union movement. The government's bill and this bill would see the further erosion of the potential for the opposition to have a sufficiently funded campaign to keep the government to account.

This bill is repugnant to me. It is clearly repugnant to the government because all of the speakers on the government side have said they oppose it. It fundamentally betrays the misunderstanding that the Greens have about democracy in our country. The moralising and the handwringing we see seeks to hide a party that has just as much politics behind it as any of the others and is very well supported in terms of funding.

I do not want to see an electoral landscape in this state where parties are unable to raise funds because of the artificial constraints placed upon them by their political opponents. That is an anathema to proper democracy. I oppose this bill. I am sure that when the vote happens there will be many in this chamber who join with me.