




Speech By  
**Kim Richards**

**MEMBER FOR REDLANDS**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 June 2020

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

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (4.21 pm): I rise in support of the Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Amendment Bill. This bill contains significant changes to the financing of electoral campaigning, signage and integrity and accountability reforms in Queensland. This bill came before our Economics and Governance Committee. We received over 70 submissions. There was a rigorous public hearing where we heard from over 23 different stakeholder organisations on the day. We heard from representatives from the Centre for Public Integrity, the Local Government Association of Queensland, the chairperson of the CCC, the Integrity Commissioner and ECQ. I found it really interesting to hear from Ms O'Shea who was the interim administrator at Logan City Council. There were some very diverse voices and views across that day.

The committee recommended the bill and made a second recommendation to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice to consider amending the bill to address the concerns that were raised in relation to the regulatory burden on small not-for-profit third-party organisations. This suggestion has been addressed in the amendments proposed for consideration in detail. It is important to remember that the purpose of our committee work is to interrogate the legislation and to make recommendations for its improvement. That is exactly what we did. We consulted, we listened and we have improved the bill and that is what we see before us today here in the House.

With regard to integrity and accountability, our government is absolutely committed to ensuring integrity at both state and local government level here in Queensland. We saw the recommendations that came out of the Belcarra report. In the entire term of the Palaszczuk government we have been committed to taking on board the recommendations that have come out of Belcarra and a range of other reports. We have seen the great work that is being done. In estimates last year we heard from the Integrity Commissioner and the chairperson of the CCC about the great work that they are doing in terms of improving where we sit today. We are absolutely continuing to build on the good work of the CCC. Our government, with the CCC, the Integrity Commissioner and the Office of the Independent Assessor, continues to improve integrity and public accountability to further build on what is really important and which the member for Bonney touched on. Politicians have a pretty low point of reference in some parts of our community. We have to continue to build confidence and faith in our elected representatives and the processes that we have.

The bill improves legislation to ensure conflicts of interest are declared and to reduce the risks of corruption. The bill contains two new offences applicable to cabinet ministers who behave dishonestly and with an intention to obtain a benefit for themselves or others or cause a detriment to others. These new offences will apply to ministers, reflecting their decision-making nature in cabinet and the higher obligations on them to uphold standards of integrity and to ensure that there is public confidence in government.

The bill amends the Integrity Act 2009 to create a criminal offence for a minister who, with intent to dishonestly gain a benefit for themselves or another person or cause detriment to another person, fails to disclose an interest. The bill also amends the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. The proposed new offences in the Integrity Act and the Parliament of Queensland Act seek to catch a deliberate and intentional dishonesty by ministers.

Integrity and accountability in our electoral process and our elected representatives is critical. When I was first elected I held a forum in my community on integrity and accountability. It is important to have a conversation with your community and get feedback about what they should expect from their elected representatives and to work hand in glove in partnership with them so that they have faith and belief in their elected representatives and in the system that creates the amazing democracy that we live in.

I am pleased that this bill also amends the City of Brisbane Act 2010, the Local Government Act 2009 and the Local Government Electoral Act 2011 and seeks to bring them into alignment. These amendments seek to improve transparency and integrity and provide consistency in the local government system and local government elections. They also build on reforms that have already been implemented. These provisions will provide greater clarity to councillors—one only needs to look at my patch and see some of the issues that we have had out there—helping them to understand what a conflict of interest is and what must then occur once such a conflict is identified.

The bill proposes amendments to address concerns about the number of local governments losing quorum on key issues where a majority of councillors declare an interest. When the elected voices of a community are not in the room making a decision there are more detrimental outcomes. Queenslanders must have confidence in both our system and its representatives—it is a key feature of our democracy—and this bill builds on that.

In terms of the electoral expenditure caps, it is levelling the playing field. It is making it fair. It is making sure that we do not platform one particular voice over another. This is an important part of this legislation that makes sure that everybody who puts their hand up to run for government is doing it on a level playing field. In one of the contributions of those opposite I heard mention of unions and third parties. I am happy to talk about Cherish Life, which ran a campaign in the Redlands in the last election. Their dodgy how-to-vote cards that were make-believe were sitting under the LNP tent. In the LNP tent were the signs and the how-to-vote cards. Do those opposite want to talk about third-party campaigns? Golly gosh! Honestly!

In terms of the signage, I think everybody will be glad to see the back end of much of that plastic rolled bunting that ends up in our landfills taking up unnecessary space. It is important that we in this chamber consider the voter experience at the polling booth. This is a step in the right direction. I know that in our community nobody likes running the gauntlet of prepoll and election day signage. The signage restrictions within chapter 3 of the bill are important and a great step forward.

Those are the key aspects of the legislation that I wish to talk about. We have to continue to ensure that Queensland has a healthy and robust democracy and that our community has trust and faith and believes in the great work that is done within this chamber by both sides of the House. This bill is about making sure Queenslanders have faith in the system and in our people. I commend the bill to the House.