




Speech By  
**Linus Power**

**MEMBER FOR LOGAN**

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

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (4.02 pm): This bill was one that we reviewed recently, but it feels like an age ago. So much has since changed in terms of the way that the COVID-19 disease has affected everything in politics, business and, indeed, elections. We note the success of the local government elections in terms of health. We noted that we were able to put arrangements in place in short time frames to be able to keep our citizens healthy. During a worldwide pandemic it is really critical that, in the face of these harsh global conditions, we continue to deliver for Queensland. First, we must continue to work together in this place to deliver the Palaszczuk government's unite and recover plan to create jobs through investment and through keeping Queensland safe to restore the work of Queenslanders. We must build on that success in hampering the spread of COVID-19 and be focused on the future, uniting to recover COVID-safe jobs. The Economics and Governance Committee, of which I am the chair along with the fine member for Mermaid Beach, will continue to play its part through not only the economic inquiry we are conducting but also listening to Queenslanders on issues that matter to them.

In this way, we continue to report on legislation including the Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Amendment Bill and the Ministerial and Other Office Holder Staff and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill is aimed at—and has the wide support of—strengthening our electoral and accountability systems. For us on this side—and I think for many perhaps even on the other side—these are not optional things to be ignored or dispensed with during a pandemic but an essential part of strengthening the bond that we have with the Queensland government and people. We say during our health response that in the plan to unite and recover we need a trust in the advice and direction from the Queensland people. In other countries we have seen cynicism, disunity and distrust. This has come at a cost to other countries. In this way, this is an economic bill, creating a high-trust, accountable society where there is a connection between the Queensland government and its people. I saw the heartbreaking story of the UK expert group's advice to cut down, because initially they felt the UK people would not believe them. We have had the opposite—a high, mutual trust that we shared in terms of the medical advice of the Chief Health Officer.

Queenslanders trusted, cared and worked together. It is a triumph of the Queensland people who worked together to keep our most vulnerable safe. It is in this way that this accountability and electoral bill is a health bill and an economic bill. It is a down payment on the investment on building on the mutual Queensland trust. We can truly unite and strongly recover over the coming months.

As members of the Economics and Governance Committee, we know that good governance and fair elections underpin the essential economic success and recovery of our state. We held an inquiry process when the bill was referred to us on 28 November 2019. We submitted the report on 7 February. As I said, the world has certainly changed a lot since 7 February. We invited written submissions, identified stakeholders and, during that period, received over 68 submissions. I am disappointed that the shadow minister, the member for Toowoomba South, felt that there was not participation, because there was very strong participation from a variety of sources who provided very great feedback. I will

speak about that further, because I want to note that the strength of this bill is reflected in some of the amendments that the Attorney-General has put forward in responding to some of that information that was put forward in the 68 submissions and also in the hearings we held.

It is really important that we have a level playing field for electoral campaigning to ensure that the person who puts forward their name has a reasonable chance and is not drowned out by a flood of dollars. This is what we are attempting to do with the bill. We know of a variety of changes, such as the changes to the funding of state elections so that we continue to have greater public funding and take away the need from people who should be pursuing better policies or ideas to try and fight in a funding war that does not benefit Queenslanders. In that way, the bill introduces caps on political donations, requires elected participants to maintain dedicated accounts, increases the public election funding of eligible parties and candidates—though the amendments address some of those issues because of COVID-19—and, especially, increases and expands policy development which has great benefit for Queenslanders.

We changed amendments relating to signage at elections. The people at the Logan tip will be grateful that I am not arriving with my Holden Crewman trailer filled with plastic bunting and other paraphernalia from various volunteers. Again, we have a clear number of signs that will make it clear who is running for elections but will not have the waste that sometimes we see, something definitely for the benefit of Queenslanders. I also note some feedback in those terms where people felt the need for a balance and that other voices needed to be heard. We noted all of that. We were not clear about the recommendations we made in the committee, but I note that the 68 amendments—which seem to be too much for the member for Toowoomba South to get his head around—addressed the information and the feedback we received from members of the public. That is an asset that should be commended.

**An honourable member:** Is that the consultation that didn't happen?

**Mr POWER:** That was our job as a committee. I note that all members of the committee were passionate about that. We also note the sections in relation to the dishonest conduct of ministers on which there was extensive debate. I really thank some opposing members of the committee who cut to the nub of some of the difficulties presented. I note that the Attorney-General said that this addresses the initial suggestions put forward.

The committee had a particular bill from the government to address. We heard all of the information and we did not have an alternative that we felt that we could support, but as a committee we supported the section as drafted by the Attorney-General. If there is at some future time alternatives, we will consider them, as we should do, because it is an important change and one that needs to be considered in legislation. I also note the extensive contribution from the local government minister about amendments relating to dishonest conduct of councillors and other matters. Turning to the amendments, as I said, the amendments are clearly aimed at addressing feedback from the community. I know that it is implied that the LNP will never listen to the community through the committee process. It is implying that taking suggestions and incorporating them is not what it is about at all—that is, it knows it all before it starts and it will not be interested in the committee process. That kind of arrogance is something that I think people should reflect on.

The first issue was signage on site reflecting on people. The second one was about delaying policy development payments in response to COVID—something that I think we all here agree with. The other issue is about recognising third parties and the burden of their declarations. Again, the government is listening to the committee in that it is responding to a recommendation that we made as a committee. The suggestion from the shadow minister is even when the committee makes a recommendation that that be ignored. That is not what this Attorney-General is about. This Attorney-General is about listening to the community and incorporating that.

I note that the member for Mermaid Beach, who is on the committee, agrees vociferously that the Attorney-General has listened really passionately. There were the signage issues, again responding to us, and then further amendments relating to COVID-19 and the safe conduct of elections which very much kept people safe. The last issue is the addition of amendments to do with Operation Yabber, and it is important that we do listen to our peak anticorruption body and respond to it. The member for Mermaid Beach said that Yabba was someone who yelled on the hill and the clear implication seems to be that when someone yells at us on the hill they are to be completely ignored, and that is what the LNP will be about—never taking discordant voices and different voices into our processes.

*(Time expired)*