




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

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

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (4.46 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Amendment Bill and the amendments before the House. In speaking more broadly to the clauses relating to chapter 2, I wholeheartedly support the proposal for funding and expenditure caps. I had never really been involved in politics for most of my adult life. The first election campaign I ever really became involved in was my own and it certainly was a bit of an eye-opener. On reflection, I can understand why the majority of Queenslanders out there consider politics to be in a completely different world. My campaign was funded by trivia nights and raffles, and I would have been lucky enough to scratch up to anywhere close to a five-figure sum in what I raised. It certainly is a matter of money. It is the involvement of money, particularly the involvement of big money, in politics that ensures that we in this House continue to court the disdain and distrust of the general community.

When the Attorney-General announced the intention to limit spending as well as donation caps, I happened to be with my Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee colleagues in Melbourne attending an Australian Public Sector Anti-Corruption Conference, which was quite fortuitous. During a panel session facilitated by the Grattan Institute, the issue of money in politics was the focus. I asked the panel about the new proposals that had been raised in Queensland. The general feeling in the room and on the panel was that this was certainly a way forward, even if it was just initial steps. Obviously, for the hard core in the room, being an anti-corruption conference, it did not go far enough. These are indeed the first steps to removing the perceptions that many people have relating to donations and influence.

Just to speak generally, the idea that one has to be able to raise a significant sum of money to participate in the political process, to actually have a voice in this House, is a fundamentally flawed one. I understand that those opposite see these limits proposed as the death of democracy but I see it as the growth. To be able to step foot in this House, it should be about the battle of ideas and ideology and not the dollars. It should be about what someone stands for and not how many pieces of glossy mail can be stuffed in one letterbox. Anyone should be able to have a go at stepping foot in this place, but the truth is many know that they do not have the money that it takes to even get a foot in the door. This is the people's house and, minor caveats aside, there should be few impediments to any person out there putting their name on the ballot and having a genuine crack at winning a seat. Money or lack of it should not be an impediment.

The other aspect of the bill that I wish to speak to is the signage limitation. I can advise the House that this is probably the part of the bill that my constituents are most looking forward to—certainly my school principals are. Over the past 24 hours I took a quick poll of the support for limitation on signage at polling places. Of the 260 people who voted, 93 per cent were in favour of the signage limitations. I would not mind having 93 per cent support in any poll that I ran in.

I understand that there has been much discussion in this House around the reasoning behind the bill. I am looking to the future in terms of where this bill will take us and how our elections are contested. I have asked a lot of the people in my electorate and they certainly do not think this bill goes far enough in terms of the signage limitation. They would like to see absolutely no signage, they would like to see no roadside stalls and they would like to see nothing in their letterbox. Looking at what we have before us in the House, I think we are quite a few steps away from that. I commend the bill to the House.