



Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

Record of Proceedings, 18 June 2020

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

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (12.48 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Amendment Bill 2019. The Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Amendment Bill 2019 was introduced into the Legislative Assembly and referred to the committee for examination on 28 November 2019. The committee was required to report to the House on the bill by 7 February 2020. The committee received 82 submissions on the bill.

Not surprisingly, the recommendation of the committee is that the bill be passed, as has been the case with every committee report in this term of government. This is because the committee chair has the casting ballot, giving the government four votes and the opposition three. If my mathematics is correct, that means the government has one more vote every time, thus recommending that any bill be passed. It is bad enough that the committee process is continually being abused in this fashion. However, in this instance it is even worse—if that is possible.

This bill is now subject to 229 amendments—229 amendments. That must be close to a record, even for this government. Many sections of this bill bear little, if any, resemblance to the bill that underwent the committee process. The truth is this Palaszczuk government has absolutely no regard for the committee system. I thought the purpose of the committee system was to provide a robust forum in which to examine a bill in great detail to ensure that once it reached the House it could withstand the scrutiny of the parliament. This is apparently not so. The entire committee process fails when every bill is rubber-stamped that the bill be recommended to pass, even if there are obvious flaws in the proposed legislation.

On Tuesday we saw the addition of a fundamental and contentious amendment to a bill that had been through the committee process. This substantive addition rendered the committee report inaccurate, so in essence the House was actually debating a bill that had not undergone the correct committee process.

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I believe the member was talking about a bill that was debated on Tuesday and he is not talking about the bill before the House. I am happy to be corrected, but he did say a bill that was being debated on Tuesday. It is not relevant.

Mr WEIR: Accountability and integrity.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Thank you. Within the long title of the bill, member for Condamine.

Mr WEIR: In my opinion the committee process that oversaw the bill that came into this House did not examine the bill that we are now debating. Unfortunately that has become an all too common process. It would come as no surprise that this bill is designed to give a significant advantage to the Labor Party in an election campaign, and the 229 amendments support this even further. The members of parliament who were here during the last term would never forget the introduction of a full preferential

voting amendment with 18 minutes notice, as I recall. Abuse of the parliamentary process and a complete disregard of the correct legislative procedures have become a regular occurrence under this Palaszczuk Labor government. These processes are regarded highly by those of us on this side of the House.

A number of stakeholders expressed concerns about the length and timing of the committee consultation process, highlighting the challenges of digesting and responding to the significant and complex legislative reforms contained in the bill during a period that coincided with the traditional Christmas and new year holiday break. These stakeholders' concerns did not particularly worry the government apparently; only concerns from its union bosses are worth paying attention to.

The bill contains a series of significant amendments relating to funding and expenditure for state elections, signage at state elections, dishonest conduct of ministers and dishonest conduct of councillors and other local government matters. To achieve these objectives, the bill proposes to introduce caps on political donations and electoral expenditure, requires election participants to maintain dedicated campaign accounts showing the integrity and compliance of the donations and expenditure caps, increases public election funding for eligible political parties and candidates, increases and expands access to policy development payments, and implements related administrative and disclosure requirements and other clarifying provisions.

To achieve these aims, the bill proposes to set limits on the number and nature of signs that can be used by election participants during voting hours within 100 metres of a pre-poll they are allocated and the period of time during which permitted signs may be set up for display in these areas. I note that there has been an amendment to the number of signs at a polling booth by political parties and of course third parties. Needless to say, the Labor Party will ensure there is adequate space for the likes of GetUp! and its union funded third parties. Naturally, if you are a business or a resource company or a private donor or—heaven forbid—a property developer, then there will be no space allocated—the very businesses that we will rely on to pay off the massive state debt, create employment and keep the economy ticking over.

An integral objective of the bill relates to the dishonest conduct of ministers and to improve the integrity and accountability of ministers by creating new offences in the Integrity Act 2009. More specifically, the bill proposes to establish two new criminal offences for instances in which a minister fails to disclose a conflict of interest or to comply with conflict of interest requirements with some dishonest intent. These are strange words to find in a piece of legislation coming from this Palaszczuk government—'integrity' and 'accountability'. If this government had some integrity and accountability, it would be presenting a budget to the people of Queensland. Instead, it is the only state in Australia not to present a budget and, coincidentally, the only state having an election in the year 2020.

It is not just the trashing of the parliamentary process and the committee system that those opposite are so adept at; it is also a complete disregard for ministerial accountability and transparency. There is a very long list of this unparliamentary behaviour. At this time we have to be very cautious about speaking about one of the most notable of these. Due to the seriousness of the allegations, there is an investigation currently underway by the CCC. I am quite sure that all in this House and the whole of Queensland are aware of this particular case.

I heard the member for Miller speak of integrity matters. This is Mr 'Mangocube' himself. We remember this minister—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Condamine, you need to refer to all members by their correct titles please.

Mr WEIR: We remember the member for Miller for using a private email to advocate for his union mates. Very foolish, I think the CCC described him as. Then the Minister for Health rose to add his voice to the integrity debate. This is the minister who rigged an online poll to justify changing the name of the Lady Cilento hospital. The Premier herself has had to come into this House to issue an apology after removing crossbench staff. If ever there was a political party that needed to abide by a higher standard, it is those opposite. These Labor members cannot abide by the current guidelines, so I have very little expectation that they will abide by the new standards. This bill is nothing more than a blatant attempt by the government to seek an advantage for itself at the next election. There is only one way that democracy can be restored in the state of Queensland, and that is to vote for Deb Frecklington and the LNP team. We will restore integrity, accountability and transparent consultation in this state.