




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR TRAEGER**

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

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (4.32 pm): As I understand it, the bill has two main objectives. One concerns securing the actual and perceived integrity of the political process by reducing the ability of people to donate to political parties and the third parties involved; the second is levelling the playing field in terms of campaigning material such as corflutes, signage and the technicalities associated with those sorts of things.

Someone in my position always thinks, 'What is the government trying to achieve here?' There is form on both sides of the House for trying to reduce the influence of minor parties. I have been here about eight years now and I have consistently seen a lot of evidence to support that. One of the first was when the laws were changed to amend the definition of minor parties so that now you need to get 10 per cent. I will just give you a little window on what that means to someone who does not align themselves with the values of the Liberal Party or the Labor Party.

Regardless of your value set, if you want to start a new political party you have to beat 100 years of branding—50 or 60 years of branding with the Liberal Party. I acknowledge that is a benefit those parties enjoy from putting in the hard work over the years, but just put yourself in my shoes. If you feel there are interests that need to be represented, you have to go out in competition against them from scratch, which is an enormous undertaking. To do that constrained by a \$4,000 donation limit is just nonsense. That would make it nigh on impossible. I can say that with great deal of authority, having started a party and having eight years experience in this place. I acknowledge there is a greater return on the vote, but if you are going to try to get through the selection then you are going to try to raise that money. That is very hard to do.

If it is someone like sporting shooters, who feel they are not represented properly in the political spectrum, here is a party that aligns with their values. How it works for us is not 'we do it for you because we give you money'. We say what we are doing, and if you choose to do that then that is good. I do not think any of the voters out there in voter land have a problem with that. That is not anything underhanded. That is just saying, 'You represent our rights so we will support you.' There is nothing underhanded about that.

I do not buy for a second that there is not some way here that Labor is able to gain some advantage from the masses of finances that are there or have been built up over the years and that there is not some strategy to still have large campaigns that are effective against any competition. There are some very sophisticated ways of doing that. I am sure that in government you do not give up opportunities to control or influence those outcomes. I do not believe for a second that this is about equity in the political process. I think it is quite the opposite. I saw that when they changed the definition of minor party status.

It is quite conspicuous that, after the parties decided there should be opposition resources, we are still waiting for an amendment. Quite frankly, this bill should have contained amendments to the QIRT legislation so that minor party or crossbench resources could be looked at in this place. The chain

is being dragged in relation to that and it should have been attached to this legislation. If this was all about fairness and trying to level the playing field, that would have been in here. That point itself is evidence enough.

The point to be debated here is that two major parties dominate this parliament. I think both parties have strong points to make and a right to be here, but so do others. It is very difficult to break into that market and it is getting harder and harder. I have seen an escalation of the constraints on anyone else trying to break into the market. I would challenge people and ask whether debates here are debates. How many times have we seen people cross the floor because they have listened to a debate, someone has changed their view on something and they have said, 'Despite being part of this party for a number of years, for once I am going to vote for the other side because that aligns with the interests of my electorate'?

We have inherited a two-party system that is clunky. It is not working for voters. It is very important to make this parliament accessible. Whether it is good for the KAP or not, the parliament should be accessible to people so they can come in here and provide diversity in debates—some real competition and make it a real debate—not just a litany of speeches endorsed by either side. Then maybe we could get some good longevity on these outcomes so they are not revolving door issues each time we change governments.

The irony is that one of the main characteristics of major parties over the last 20 years has been their strong adherence to strong competition and free markets, but to me this regulates competition out of this market of parliament. It is making it harder. I can again speak with great authority because I am a minor party that is trying to break in. We are experiencing this exact process. We are doing the spreadsheets now on what we can get out of this election and what we need to raise to get through. I can assure you that this bill is designed to make things hard for people like us.

Those are the main points I would like to make. I will again say that I am enormously frustrated about the resources we do not seem to get in this place. You can set our office up in a tent in the gardens but we will still turn up here to challenge the parliament, regardless of whether we get our resources this parliament or not. Even if we do not get them the next parliament, the irony again is that adversity breeds determination. The harder you make it for us with legislation like this, the harder we are going to come back.