




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

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

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (5.14 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Amendment Bill 2019. This bill has an interesting long title because it talks about accountability and integrity. The reason for this bill is that we have not seen much of that from the executive of this government. We have seen failure after failure of integrity and we have seen failure after failure of leadership in dealing with those breaches of integrity by the Premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk. I am interested to understand why we would have to legislate these things if people acted with integrity. The reason we are here is that quite clearly the executive of the Labor government has no integrity. If it had any integrity, then we would not need this legislation.

I want to start by talking about one little issue with regard to the local government amendments, and I want to use an analogy. Imagine if what is being done to our mayors was done in this House for state members. There would be a situation where in the Premier's seat she might get a vote of, let us say, 72.9 per cent—somewhat similar to what the mayor of Toowoomba received—and the person coming second received 19 per cent. Imagine what members in this House would say if something happened to the Premier and she was unable to fulfil her duties in this chamber so it automatically fell to her opponent who received 19 per cent.

What would members in this chamber say about what just happened to democracy? They would say it is absolutely outrageous. They would suggest that it was a complete perversion of the people's vote to appoint that person instead of the mayor who received 72.9 per cent. That is exactly what this bill does, and it is a complete and utter shame. It is an absolute shame that that could exist, that we would even contemplate it. Imagine the outrage of the people of Toowoomba if the person for whom almost nobody voted for—less than one in five—became the mayor by default. That would be terrible.

Let me move on to what really is at the heart of this bill, and it relates to the conducting of elections in our state. Why do we conduct elections in our state? We conduct elections because the people's voice should be heard and the representatives they select should be their voice in this chamber, answerable to them. That is what I am. I am a strong local voice for my community in Toowoomba and that is what I bring into this chamber. Instead of putting that power in the local member's hands, this bill with sleight of hand and with trickery and with deceit puts it in the hands of the unions.

At the election I will be allowed six signs at a polling booth. My opponent will be allowed six signs. The unions will be allowed 104. That is 104 to six. First of all, that is not fewer signs. Second of all, I think the people of Queensland will look at that and say, 'Do you know what? That doesn't seem fair. Why would someone do that?' Let me tell members why someone would do that. People do that because this House is no longer about the people; it is about power. It is about the power of the elite of the Labor Party and they will do anything to preserve that power, including corrupting our democratic processes in Queensland. They absolutely crave the power. They do not serve the people. They are not interested in the people. If they were interested in the people, they would not bring in over 200 amendments into this place without even asking the people. Would they do that? If you really

respected the people, would you not come into this place and say, 'Do you know what? We think there's a problem with some of the Electoral Act. What we're going to do is we're going to propose some changes. I know. Let's put it through a committee structure. Why don't we call for witnesses and experts in our community to look at this bill?'

The bill that the committee looked at does not actually reflect anything that is in this bill in relation to the Electoral Act. The 120-something amendments across 100 pages were dropped in very late. We know that the guillotine will drop and the idea of being able to study them carefully and debate them as they are put into the different clauses to make sure these are amendments that will serve the people of Queensland well—that is the job of this place—is completely gone because the elite want the power. They do not want to talk to the people. They do not want to ask the people. What they want to do is tell the people what they are going to do and how they are going to influence their vote without them even realising it has happened. It is a complete disgrace.

I am positive that the people of Queensland will be very interested to know that the unions can outspend a local candidate by over 26 to 1. Twenty-six unions can come into an electorate and they can spend over \$80,000 each and the local person, the local lady, the local guy, will be allowed to defend themselves or to try to grab a little bit of opportunity to represent their community with just some \$50,000. Does anybody think that is democratic? Is there anybody in here who genuinely thinks that having 26 organisations that are completely aligned, that form part of one larger organisation, that spend all of their funding on one side of politics, that own and control most of the members in this place, that gave them jobs when they lost their seats, looked after them and protected them, is there anybody who thinks that these amendments will not restrict the unfettered power and control of the union movement interfering in the executive and interfering in the management of Queensland? I see a lot of heads go down because they know the truth of it. The simple truth is that without the union backing they would not even be able to get into this place.

**Mr Bailey** interjected.

**Mr WATTS:** I hear the minister over there, the foolish minister as described by the CCC, squawking away—Minister Bailey. He is busy telling me about accountability. Let me tell him, when I make a mistake I am accountable for it. You need to look in the mirror, Minister, and see if you can say the same.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr WATTS:** Through the chair, Mr Deputy Speaker, I apologise. The minister is busy squawking away with his interjections about accountability and yet we have seen none. We all know the debacle that was mangocube. We all know who his puppetmasters are. We all know who pulls the strings of the executive of the Labor government. It is painfully obvious from the private emails who pulls the strings. This bill should be about the people. It should be about policy. It should be about making sure the people have confidence in the institution that is the parliament of Queensland. It should be about what the long title says—accountability and integrity—but it is not. It is a cover-up to defend the elite so that they can abuse the power and they can reward their union masters. That is what this bill is about. It is about rushed amendments. It is about deceit and sleight of hand. It is about protecting mates and making sure that there will be plenty of opportunities for them after the Labor Party win an election. That is what this is about.

Democracy in Queensland has died with this bill. Integrity in Queensland has died with this bill. The Labor Party should be ashamed of bringing this bill into the House. I thought better of the Attorney-General who complained about the plethora of signs that were allowed and now lets the union put 100 up against my six and tells me that that is a level playing field. It is far from it!