




Speech By  
**Brent Mickelberg**

**MEMBER FOR BUDERIM**

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL AND OTHER LEGISLATION  
(EXPENDITURE CAPS) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (4.56 pm): I rise to address the Local Government Electoral and Other Legislation (Expenditure Caps) Amendment Bill, a bill that seeks to implement expenditure caps for local government elections and ensure all candidates have a fair opportunity to participate in local government elections, so it begs the question why the government has come in here with completely unrelated amendments that seek to hobble Queensland mums and dads who own a rental property. Not only are they unrelated to the subject matter of the bill; the government has even had to get permission to move the amendments because the same question has already been put to the parliament this term. It smacks of the chaos and the confusion all too often on display with this Palaszczuk Labor government. All too often the best that the Premier can deliver for Queenslanders is ill-conceived policy ideas on the run and thought bubbles.

Rather than deliver a real plan that will address the housing crisis affecting so many Queensland communities, rather than delivering more supply and working collaboratively with Queensland councils, the state government has decided to attack self-reliant Queenslanders who own an investment property. We know the Greens hate those who own investment properties, but based on the evidence presented by the Premier and those opposite in recent weeks it looks like Labor does too. How reducing the confidence of Queenslanders to invest in residential property is going to encourage more people to invest their hard-earned savings in building new rental properties remains to be seen. The amendments here today look a lot more like a response to a media problem than a substantive plan to address a critical problem facing Queenslanders, facing small businesses and facing communities right across the state.

The member for Nudgee, the Minister for Children and Youth Justice, said interest rates were responsible, she tried to blame macro-economic factors and she said that these were about making it fairer for renters, but the reality is that the kinds of provisions the Premier has been talking about—such as rental caps—make it harder for those who want to invest in rental property and drive more stock onto the market. These provisions disadvantage property owners—property owners who are nurses, doctors and tradies. In a previous debate in this House the member for Cooper spoke succinctly and passionately about her journey to be a property investor and I thought she said it very well: the majority of property owners are not wealthy multimillionaires; they are mums and dads, they are hardworking tradies, doctors, nurses and administrators who are just trying to get by, trying to be self-reliant and trying to set themselves up for the future. Unfortunately, what we have seen is this government seeking to attack those same people. Put simply, Queenslanders deserve better.

I turn to the substantive issue that is before us, which is local government expenditure caps. At the outset I will say that integrity and transparency in government are fundamental to ensure public confidence in our democratic institutions. Unfortunately, too often they have been lacking from this state government. That concept includes local government. Transparency and integrity are fundamental to

ensure public confidence at a local government level as well. Just as they should be at every single level, local government elections must be free and fair. They must be free from undue influence. While we are not opposed to the implementation of expenditure caps for local government elections, we do have concerns in relation to the effect of some of the provisions contained in this bill.

When viewed through the lens of ensuring public confidence in free and fair elections, the fact that this legislation will enable Labor and their union masters to outspend other political parties by a ratio of 26 to one in the Brisbane City Council election is simply unacceptable. The same situation exists at a state government level, and Labor is seeking to extend it to the Brisbane City Council and use it to their advantage. This is an electoral fix designed to favour Labor at the expense of other political parties, plain and simple. Not only has Labor tilted the odds in their favour through previous changes to electoral donation law; now they seek to further tilt the odds in their favour at the expense of Queenslanders, and Queenslanders deserve better.

I have heard what those opposite have said. I think it was the member for Pumicestone who talked about the LGAQ's position on this bill. We agree with the LGAQ that there should be a parliamentary review of this legislation 12 months after the next local government elections because far too often we have seen this government ignore the sorts of mechanisms that will ensure that provisions such as these will work.

**Mr Healy** interjected.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** I hear the member for Cairns interjecting. I understand he is the future mayor of Cairns. He is sick of selling his soul by representing Labor.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart):** Pause the clock. Member for Cairns, I have warned you three times. You are now under an official warning.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** I hear the member for Cairns interjecting. As I understand it, he is the future mayor of Cairns. That is the word on the street. We know that he is sick of selling his soul for Labor gerrymanders and wants to jump ship to local government. All power to him. I would not want to sell my soul either. The reality is that the people of Cairns and the people of Queensland deserve free and fair local government. Local governments perform a very important role in Queensland and right across the nation. We really need to ensure that the system is free and fair.

The member for Ipswich spoke about expenditure caps 'levelling the playing field'. She spoke of raffle drives, grassroots campaigning and fundraising. That begs a question. If the unions—all 25 of them, or 26 if you include the Labor Party—can each spend \$1.3 million, that means \$33.8 million for the Brisbane City Council. That is what Labor's masters can spend and they have said they are just an arm of the union movement. That is what they can spend in the Brisbane City Council when other political parties can spend \$1.3 million. If that is not a gerrymander then I do not know what is.

Rather than making it harder for Queenslanders to represent their local communities, the state government should be seeking to reduce the burden on councillors who represent their local communities. At the moment we have a perverse situation where local government councillors are required to meet a far higher standard of behaviour than state government ministers. Surely if we expect councillors to meet a certain standard then the Minister for Local Government and all state members of parliament should be held to the same standard. However, right now they are not. Right now the Minister for Local Government is held to a lesser standard than a councillor in a western Queensland council. It is simply not good enough.

In a small western community with less than 200 electors, you have to ask yourself why anyone would subject themselves to the current regime by representing their community. Why would they work for their community as a local councillor when they are going to be put through the bureaucratic burden and the hurdles that currently exist? The OIA has been an abject failure. It seems that this government is intent on waging war on local councils. They want to make it harder for people to run for local government. We need as many candidates to put up their hands for local government elections as possible so we get the best representatives for our communities. Frequently being a local government councillor is a thankless task. Not every local government councillor is on the Brisbane City, Sunshine Coast or Gold Coast councils. Those are large councils and it is a full-time job, and it should be. However, with many of the councils that we are talking about it is a vocation. It is a calling to serve your community. You have to ask why someone would put themselves through it when those opposite seem intent on destroying the fabric of local councils.

It is for all of those the reasons that we need a parliamentary review after the next local government elections. I call on the government to support the amendment that will be moved by the shadow minister for local government. We want to see a parliamentary review supported by the

parliamentary committee. They should be reviewing this legislation 12 months after the next local government elections. We do not want some bureaucratic oversight. The parliament should be reviewing this through the committee system and that will ensure that we can assess the effectiveness, fairness and impartiality of these laws. I know some of the provisions will be changed by regulation. I have serious reservations with respect to those provisions. The LGAQ support a committee review 12 months after the elections. On this side of the House we think that is an appropriate course of action.

While we will be supporting the bill, I call on those opposite to support the sensible amendment that will be moved by the shadow minister for local government and to listen to the voices of the people in this space. The government should listen to the LGAQ and the councillors who made contributions. I know that all members of the House have strong relationships with their local councillors. To be frank, you would be crazy not to because they are closest to the community. My local councillors, Councillor Christian Dickson and Councillor Ted Hungerford, are two of the people with whom I work closest. I think that is what our community expects. We should be making their jobs easier, not harder. We should be ensuring that they are able to meet the demands of their communities and no more so than in places such as Bouliá, Richmond and the Diamantina shire. Those are the areas where people are doing it for the love of the community. It is a community service. I call on those opposite to keep them in mind when they are forming legislation and keep them in mind when considering whether they will support the opposition's amendment for a parliamentary review 12 months after the next local government elections.