




Speech By  
**Bruce Saunders**

**MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH**

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

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (3.40 pm): I rise in support of the Local Government Electoral and Other Legislation (Expenditure Caps) Amendment Bill 2022. We are being lectured by that side about local government reform! Who remembers the local government reforms that were brought in during the Newman era? The Leader of the Opposition was the then minister who brought in those reforms that created a lot of trouble in local governments around Queensland.

We are lucky that we can go back a long way. Who remembers the government prior to the Goss government coming to power in Queensland? I grew up in Longreach. I think Longreach had one councillor and the rest were rural and regional councillors with that voting system. It is only the Labor government that has brought reform, and good reform, into local government elections.

I take the interjection from the member for Bancroft when he said before that the LNP do not want politics in local government. The only politics they do not want in local government is that of Labor or working class people. I take that interjection from the member for Bancroft because he is absolutely spot on. That is all they want. They want to stay in their own little bubble and keep local government for their own mates.

What they do not realise is that councils are more than rates, roads and rubbish. Take the Fraser Coast Regional Council as an example. It is one of the biggest employers in the region. It employs a lot of people. When we elect people to council—I agree with the member for Bundaberg—we have to elect people who have ideas and who are there for their communities, not people who have the biggest chequebooks so they can spend.

In the committee report there was unanimous support amongst inquiry participants for the introduction of an expenditure caps scheme in Queensland. I have been talking to people across the Fraser Coast. They are in line with this and think that what we are doing is correct. They want to see people at the community level in local government who are there for the community. We know that the LNP use councils as their nursery. That is where they bring a lot of their candidates through. That is their nursery for candidates.

**Mr Harper:** There's a nursery over there!

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I take that interjection from the member for Thuringowa. It is a bit of a nursery over there. Some of their ideas have not matured. Let's just say that. Their ideas for the people of Queensland have not matured.

They talk about caps. Let's look at the Fraser Coast Regional Council. The average division has 7,800 voters. You could throw a blanket over them. You really could. That is how small they are compared to state and federal electorates. Let's be honest, if you cannot get around to see 7,800 voters throughout your four-year term with a \$15,000 cap, there is something wrong with you. With \$15,000 and that many people in a division, you can letterbox and do whatever you like, particularly with

Facebook and other social media. It is a load of rubbish to say that caps will hinder democracy. That is absolute garbage. It will not hinder democracy. What it will do is heighten democracy because we will get decent candidates. We do not want to talk about the Fraser Coast Regional Council. Have a look at the Fraser Coast Regional Council. We have had a mayor who has been sent to jail. There is a councillor there at the moment who is an absolute disgrace to our community.

**Mr Whiting:** An embarrassment.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I take that interjection from the member for Bancroft. He is an embarrassment for our region and an embarrassment for the people who live in our area. That is why we need major reform in local government. This is a start to make sure that we keep everything on track.

Let's have a look at the rent provisions in the bill before the House—what I call the fair renting reforms. I stand here in amazement when those opposite lecture us about when they were in power. Remember the reforms they wanted to bring into housing when they were in power? If you were in a housing commission house or unit, you had to open up your back bedroom and take people in. You could not go on holidays. Do you remember that? I see the former minister sitting over there. You could not go on holidays. I have never seen anything so bad. I can remember campaigning about that in the 2015 election. People were terrified that there would be a knock on the door—that Housing would send someone around with two bags who would say, 'Hey, we're moving in,' because Housing said you had to rent out the back room. They were getting it ready to sell. They were 'unshackling' housing in Queensland. They were going to do some 'pruning'. They were going to sell off housing in Queensland.

I was listening to some of the speeches where they said, 'This does not go on.' I was listening to the member for Pine Rivers before. A lady came to me who had had two housing contracts in six months where the rent had gone up \$120 each time. That is what happened to a single mother in my area. It is disgraceful. It is only a Labor government that makes changes for the better for people. They said, 'We haven't had this come through.' Well we have unfortunately. I have seen it every day.

**Mr Mander** interjected.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** 'Tiny Tim' has just spoken. He is talking about his reforms when he was housing minister.

**Mr POWELL:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Bush): Pause the clock.

**Mr POWELL:** The member needs to refer to members by their correct title.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I agree. Member for Maryborough, you do need to use correct titles in this House.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I withdraw. We on this side of the House look after people. We take seriously the concerns of people when they come to us and tell us about rents and what is happening to Queenslanders. A Labor government makes sure that people are looked after, and that is what we are doing. I commend both ministers for this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.