




Speech By  
**Dr Christian Rowan**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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### **INTEGRITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (5.04 pm): I rise to address the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I hear the member for Capalaba and the hypocrisy of members opposite in relation to integrity, accountability and openness of government here in Queensland. It is just extraordinary. The unions, whether it is the ETU or the CFMEU, have been on the phone regularly to ministers and government members over the last nine years, lobbying in relation to various legislation. We had the mangocube debacle in relation to the former transport minister here in Queensland. The hypocrisy is unbelievable. What we need here in Queensland is government that is open, that is transparent and that is accountable. We need integrity restored here in Queensland.

I begin my contribution today by reflecting on what I said when the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Public Sector Bill were debated back in 2022. At the time I said that integrity, accountability, openness and transparency were the very foundations of democratic government here in Queensland. By its own actions and through various reviews, public revelations and damning reports, it was clear that the state Labor government here in Queensland had abandoned these core democratic principles.

This legislation, as introduced by the former Labor premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, is meant to represent the so-called second tranche of legislation to address the significant recommendations made to the state Labor government from two important reviews and reports: *Let the sunshine in: review of culture and accountability in the Queensland public sector*, known as the Coaldrake report, which was delivered by Professor Peter Coaldrake AO on 28 June 2022; and *Strategic review of the Integrity Commissioner's functions*, known as the Yearbury report, which was delivered by Mr Kevin Yearbury PSM on 30 September 2021.

It must be remembered why it was that Professor Peter Coaldrake was commissioned to conduct his review and report. It was because under this state Labor government we saw one of the darkest chapters in Queensland's integrity history in more than three decades. At the time we witnessed three of our state's most important integrity figures depart the Public Service, including the then chair of the Crime and Corruption Commission, the Queensland Integrity Commissioner and the State Archivist, along with very damning and serious allegations levelled at this state Labor government. Queenslanders deserved nothing short of a full commission of inquiry into alleged corruption within the Queensland Labor government. Instead, this weak Labor government chose to deflect from its own failings, dubious behaviour and corruption allegations and instead decided to simply have a review into the culture and accountability of our hardworking Public Service. That was important.

Notwithstanding that, I do want to acknowledge and thank Professor Peter Coaldrake for his detailed report and considered recommendations, many of which are the focus of this legislation currently before the House. To that end, I note that the objectives of this legislation are to: increase the regulation of lobbying activity; enhance the regulatory role of the Queensland Integrity Commissioner; amend the conditions for registration as a lobbyist; introduce a prohibition on a registered lobbyist playing a 'substantial' role for a political party in an election campaign; enhance the independence of

certain statutory integrity bodies by increasing the involvement of parliamentary committees in additional funding proposals and contributing to key appointments; enhance the jurisdiction of the Queensland Ombudsman to consider complaints about and initiate investigations of government services provided by non-government entities; establish the Office of the Queensland Integrity Commissioner as a statutory body; and clarify the trusts that the Auditor-General is required to audit.

I want to particularly reflect on the provisions that pertain to regulation of lobbying activity. I draw attention to the issues that have been raised by the Australian Professional Government Relations Association. In their submission to the Queensland parliament's Economics and Governance Committee, a number of important matters were raised which only underscore this state Labor government's lack of diligence and commitment to implementing genuine integrity reform. Those issues include: a distinct lack of clarity on what is not a lobbying activity; the inconsistency in the four-year disqualification period of practitioners who have worked on campaigns compared to the existing two-year restriction for former senior government representatives; loopholes around lobbyists that hold a senior role in political parties but step down for the election period; as well as concerns regarding the unchecked powers of the Integrity Commissioner in regulating lobbying.

I also note that the Queensland Law Society has expressed concerns that restricting lobbyists from playing a substantial role in an election campaign is open to interpretation and that what is contained within the legislation is not in line with the body of the Coaldrake report. Given the problematic history of the Labor government and its interactions with lobbyists, it should come as no surprise that once again it has failed to comprehensively strengthen the regulation of lobbyists and lobbying activities. How could we forget how lobbyists ran Labor's 2020 state election campaign, with one lobbyist even given desks and car-parking spaces so they could run Labor's then campaign out of 1 William Street while, in doing so, working alongside public servants?

These were not the only instances raised in relation to the interactions of lobbyists and the state Labor government. The 2023 budget estimates committee hearing for the education portfolio heard that back in October 2020, during the state election campaign, the chief of staff of the then education minister met with a lobbyist from Anacta Strategies on behalf of a client which then received millions of dollars in state government contracts. It was also raised during the same budget hearing that the Labor Party aligned Anacta Strategies met with the ministerial office of the former minister for education just a week and a half before a \$40 million contract was awarded by the Labor state government on a sole supplier basis for medical services at the \$220 million Wellcamp facility.

Labor's commitment to improving integrity in government and regulating lobbyists cannot be taken seriously. The decision by this state Labor government to not even support the LNP's amendments to the motion earlier today in relation to extending the publishing of diaries to parliamentary committee chairs really just says it all. The hypocrisy is astounding. Under this state Labor government former Labor ministers with powerful committee roles will not have to reveal their diaries, allowing for secret meetings with Labor lobbyists to go ahead, and all of that information will not have to be detailed publicly. If we want to talk about openness, transparency and integrity, it would have been important for that to be included. Such an arrangement is farcical, which is not surprising given Labor's track record of avoiding scrutiny. It is just another chapter in the long history of this state Labor government's integrity failures. Who could forget the mangocube affair involving the member for Miller, who was investigated by the Crime and Corruption Commission for his use and subsequent deletion of emails?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Member, I am listening to your contribution and I am struggling to find the relevance. I ask you to move on to other parts of your contribution.

**Dr ROWAN:** There are a plethora of other integrity as well as openness and transparency matters that have plagued this state Labor government, and many served as the genesis for this and other legislation. As we know, there have certainly been serious allegations regarding inappropriate interference in the Office of the Integrity Commissioner. There were damning allegations by a former ministerial media adviser, including that Labor government and ministerial offices were brimmed with partisan staff who put loyalty to the party and its cause above everything else, as well as the former state archivist publicly stating that his ability to act on matters of integrity was significantly compromised and unsupported.

Whilst this legislation is a step forward, it is long overdue and still does not comprehensively address what is required to ensure openness, transparency and integrity in government. That is why on 26 October this year, as all Queenslanders know, we need a new government that is going to be open, transparent and accountable and acts in Queenslanders' interests. This legislation will be a step forward, but it is a damning indictment of this Labor government that they have taken so long to bring this legislation forward. They have not acted in the interests of Queenslanders. They have not been

open, transparent and accountable. There are a raft of integrity matters that continue to plague this government and have plagued this government over the last nine years. Whilst they try and talk about being a new government, they are not a new government. It is the same faces that are sitting there on the other side. They might have shuffled around cabinet positions and there might have been a few new people who have come in, but it is the same people on the other side. It is the same Labor government, the same old tired faces lacking openness, accountability and integrity in government. On 26 October Queenslanders will be able to show Labor the door.