




Speech By  
**Daniel Purdie**

**MEMBER FOR NINDERRY**

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

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (4.47 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. This is the second integrity bill put before the House that is designed to address the recommendations of two reports, the Coaldrake report and the Yearbury report. In his June 2022 report *Let the sunshine in: review of culture and accountability in the Queensland public sector*, the Coaldrake report, Professor Peter Coaldrake AO made 14 direct recommendations to strengthen the integrity of the Queensland government. Similarly, in his September 2021 report *Strategic review of the Integrity Commissioner's functions*, the Yearbury report, Mr Kevin Yearbury also recommended a number of changes designed to guide the Labor government towards honesty and accountability. While these recommendations are eminently valuable, it is telling of a government that has lost its way. Time and time again, this third-term Labor government has proven that, at its core, it is bereft of a wholeness of character and its operations lack integrity. Queenslanders deserve better.

Integrity can be defined in a number of ways. For me, there are four ways to practise integrity: a commitment to honesty and openness; congruence of talk and action; consistency with adhering to values over time; and, lastly, coherence, which in this context is an act of doing the right thing for the right reasons and not just because it looks good.

This government is a government in crisis and, tragically, we watch as it desperately does whatever it takes to control the narrative, hide the truth and protect itself in order to look good. The government's handling of the Olympics and Paralympic games is an affront to any claim made to being open and transparent. The former premier and her deputy, the now Premier, ignored calls to establish an independent body to oversee games infrastructure, instead centralising that control in her own office. To justify that decision, Labor then spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars on a report to justify that dubious decision. That report, which cost a staggering \$44,000 a page, was authored by former Labor minister Rachel Nolan whose involvement in the report was deceptively and cunningly kept out of the right to information documents.

This cluster of decision-making and actions perfectly demonstrates Labor's lack of commitment to openness, incongruous with how it otherwise claims to operate, is inconsistent with parliamentary values and incoherent in intention and behaviour. This sorry saga strikes at the heart of the integrity issues that Queenslanders continue to witness every day, despite the reshuffling of seats. Is it any wonder we saw the new Premier, who repeatedly defended the unexplained \$1.7 billion blowout of the Gabba knockdown, shut it down completely when he was—

**Mr TANTARI:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. As a committee chair, what the member is talking about is totally irrelevant to this bill. My point of order is on relevance.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): I will take some advice. Thank you for your point of order. Yes, member for Ninderry, I am listening carefully to your contribution. I do need to find some link and tie it back to the actual objectives of the bill.

**Mr PURDIE:** I take your advice, Mr Deputy Speaker. I did hear the previous member—I served on the Economics and Governance Committee—talk in his contribution a number of times about this bill enshrining transparency, integrity and fairness. I think I am talking to that point, but I will try to make it directly relevant to the bill as per your instructions, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The government states that this bill implements outstanding recommendations from the Coaldrake and Yearbury reports; however, my committee colleagues and I heard a number of concerns from the state's key integrity officers, such as the Auditor-General and Integrity Commissioner, that the legislation does not fully reflect the intent of the Coaldrake report. In fact, the Auditor-General went so far as to say the Premier misrepresented him by claiming that he was expanding on the Coaldrake recommendation when he in fact was highlighting quite the opposite: that the government was implementing a summary recommendation instead of the full recommendation.

The government claims the bill's focus is on strengthening the regulation of lobbyists and lobbying activities and enhancing the independence of core integrity bodies; however, these claims fall short of reality by failing to address the loopholes in lobbying laws. The government says the bill will: increase regulation of lobbying activities to address the public perception of undue influence on governments, including clarifying what lobbying activity is and enhancing the regulatory role of the Queensland Integrity Commissioner; amend the conditions for registration as a lobbyist to reflect expectations around completing training and managing conflicts of interest; introduce a prohibition on a registered lobbyist playing a substantial role for a political party in an election campaign; enhance core integrity bodies' independence 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 service 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.

The bill proposes to amend core integrity bodies' legislation to give relevant parliamentary committees greater involvement in governance decisions for those integrity bodies. This includes requiring parliamentary committees to: agree to the recruitment process, remuneration terms and conditions and subsequent appointment of the Queensland Ombudsman, Queensland Auditor-General, Queensland Integrity Commissioner and Queensland Information Commissioner; consider and approve, or otherwise, funding proposals from the core integrity agencies prior to government consideration; agree to the terms of reference for a strategic review and appointment of the strategic reviewer; and table integrity agencies' annual reports required under the Financial Accountability Act 2009, except for the Crime and Corruption Commission.

The bill provides that, where a committee approved funding proposal is altered during budget consideration, the relevant portfolio minister will be responsible for tabling a response, including the reasons for alteration. The bill will expand the Queensland Ombudsman's functions under the Ombudsman Act 2001 to include non-government service providers where the providers are contracted to deliver public services on behalf of the government in line with the Coaldrake report recommendations.

During the committee hearings it was revealed that it is possible for a registered lobbyist to deregister themselves for the four- to six-week election period with no restriction on them re-registering after the election and actively working as a lobbyist during that four-year term of government. I quote the Integrity Commissioner who said of the definitions around third party clients, official dealings and inconsistencies when defining what is, or is not, a lobbying activity. She said—

There are some clauses and new sections of the Bill, several of which relate to Chapter 4 (regulation of lobbying) where, in my view, the amendments are not consistent with a Coaldrake recommendation, create a vulnerability or opportunity to circumvent what is intended, or where ambiguity might make implementation in practice challenging.

The Planning Institute Australia expressed concerns about ambiguity in terms of whether the activities of planners would be captured as lobbying. Similar concerns were raised by the Property Council about the ability of other people within the industry acting on behalf of their clients to engage with government.

QCROSS requested more clarity around the definition of the non-profit entities and whether non-profit entities could be investigated by the Ombudsman. Professional Government Relations Australia raised issues such as a lack of clarity on what is not a lobbying activity, inconsistency in the four-year disqualification period of practitioners who have worked in campaigns compared to the existing two-year restriction for former senior government representatives and loopholes around lobbyists who hold a senior role in political parties but step down for the short election period.

The CCC reiterated its concerns that lobbying records should be extended to electoral office staff and MPs and that in-house lobbying should be included. The Queensland Law Society expressed its concern that restricting lobbyists from playing a substantial role in election campaigns is open to interpretation and that what is proposed is not in line with the body of the Coaldrake report. The Office of the Information Commissioner agrees with the Auditor-General that the proposal does not go far enough on independence and pointed out that the mandatory data breach notification scheme has not been implemented.

Not even people closest to this bill will attest that it achieves this. Certainly, Queenslanders have little faith in a government that is well known for waving around flashy new rule books, while it continues to play the game it has always played where the referee is either not invited or is silenced. While the legislative reform in this bill is welcome and long overdue, until the culture of integrity issues poisoning this government are fully exposed and ministers held accountable, Queenslanders' lack of faith and trust in this government will not be restored. I commend the bill to the House.