




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Record of Proceedings, 20 August 2024

CRIME AND CORRUPTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (4.38 pm): There have been a number of things raised. A lot of it has revolved around the Fitzgerald report and the Fitzgerald inquiry. I have a few things to say that are entirely relevant to the bill. For inspiration, I need go no further than the statement of reservation provided by the opposition members of the committee in this matter. They raised a number of glaring issues. Obviously we are going to support this bill, because it is by and large bringing in things which at length must be brought in in order to keep our important anti-corruption institution relevant and able, but not everything that we want or need is provided for in this bill.

Firstly, there was the perplexing and troubling development where, in spite of the recommendations of the PCCC, the tenure for appointment to the positions of deputy chair and chairperson of the CCC is not going to be done on the basis of up to seven years but a fixed seven-year term. That undermines bipartisanship, which is a very important element of the PCCC and the CCC. It goes right back to the original recommendation of Fitzgerald that there be genuine bipartisanship and an ability for the opposition of the day to have an effect on these very important matters so that a government in a unicameral parliament like ours does not call all of the shots on anti-corruption measures.

There is also the matter of bipartisan support for PCCC decision-making. I will read an extract from the statement of reservation directly into the record because it is so succinct. It states—

The Government rejected recommendation 2 of the PCCC's 2021 5 year review ... to reform the definition of 'bipartisan support' to ensure such decisions are genuinely bipartisan. In the past the drafting of this definition has been manipulated by the Government to have the PCCC approve appointments to the CCC that were not supported by the Opposition.

That is a flagrant breach of the spirit of the institution of the CCC and its forebears as envisaged by Commissioner Fitzgerald in his landmark report of 1989.

I also heard members on the government side wax lyrical about the Fitzgerald inquiry and give us a history lesson about what occurred there. I heard names like Matt Foley. If I remember rightly, Matt Foley, as a Labor Party man, actually had leave to appear before the commission. Where is Matt Foley now when we see the government trampling over bipartisanship in the control and oversight of the CCC?

Following on from what the member for Bundaberg was saying about Fitzgerald and how it was important to have the institution strong and progressive in order to safeguard democracy in our state, if I remember rightly—and I am seldom wrong about these things—I think Fitzgerald said that an electorate denied information cannot be taken to have approved that of which it was unaware. Where is the report in relation to Jackie Trad and what about the suppression—I can see it is going to happen but I can get it in—of the CCC?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Pause the clock. Member for Southern Downs, you have been in here and seen members pulled away from that particular subject. I would ask you to stick to responding to other members or talking to the bill, please.

Mr LISTER: If I may, I will respond to a number of members on my side, including the member for Nanango, in saying that we ought to see that report, but I will move on.

The observation has been made by many on this side before me that the pace of reform has been glacial. We have heard about there being eight years between the recommendations and seeing some of them appear here in legislation before us at five minutes to midnight from a government that is very tired and lacking in ideas. Why is that? It is because the Labor Party, contrary to its pious protestations that it is the guardian of integrity in ensuring governments are held to account, does not like the work of the CCC when they were in government. They are never in a hurry to implement measures, necessary though they may be, which may involve them being scrutinised and having to disclose what goes on behind the scenes. That is what it is all about.

Despite all of the protestations from the government side of the House that they are leaders in terms of integrity, that is codswallop. I would say to the people of Southern Downs that if you want to look at a government that does not have integrity there is a virtuoso example of one in this House: the Miles Labor government. We have seen so many times when they have failed to release to the electorate through parliament or other mechanisms information which is important for the people to have in order to hold the government to account, and that goes back to what Fitzgerald was saying. It was fundamental to his recommendations that the electorate must be informed and there must be mechanisms to ensure that the government of the day does not have the ability to stymie debate or withhold information which is relevant to the electorate and thereby dominate the electoral system. I think I will leave it there.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr LISTER: Was that a request for me to keep speaking? I can continue. When I was 12 years old I went and sat in the gallery of courtroom 24 in the District Court, which is where the Fitzgerald inquiry was being held. It was very interesting. I challenge anybody on that side of the House to a debate with me on the implications of Fitzgerald and what his report said. I will be watching to see if there are any more government speakers ahead of me or after me and hold them to account for what they might say to the House.