




Speech By
Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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CRIME AND CORRUPTION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (6.28 pm): I rise to support the LNP's private member's bill moved by the shadow Attorney-General, the member for Clayfield, because Queenslanders deserve honesty, transparency, openness and integrity from their government. They are not getting this from the state Labor government. Instead, this government is failing Queenslanders when it comes to the simple expectation of being honest and acting with integrity. That is why the LNP opposition had to bring this private member's bill to this House.

This bill addresses the deficiency in the law identified by the High Court in the case of the Crime and Corruption Commission v Carne. Specifically, it addresses the deficiency in the reporting powers of the act found by the High Court. Essentially, the effect of this judgement is that the CCC is not able to report on corruption investigations. The LNP's private member's bill will fix this. The LNP's bill will also reverse a 2018 amendment that omitted the Director of Public Prosecutions from section 49 of the CC Act—a move that was previously recommended by the PCCC and the commission of inquiry relating to the CCC.

The LNP put this bill to parliament in October last year. In fact, in February this year—five months after we tabled this bill—the Premier announced a review to be led by Justice Holmes, at which point the CCC actually stated that they did not think this review was necessary and instead just wanted the law changed to fix the problem. The Labor Party engaged this review in order to kick it into the long grass, to delay these legislative changes, to delay the CCC getting the power they need to report on corruption.

If the government were truly serious about integrity, they would pass this bill tonight. There is no good reason for this bill not to be passed. The Premier can choose to continue to gag the CCC ahead of the October election and cover up corruption reports, or he can choose integrity and he can pass these laws. It is as simple as that. These are laws which the CCC chair himself says are required and will allow them to do the job of being an effective corruption watchdog. During estimates, when asked about the LNP's bill, the CCC chair, Mr Barbour, said—

The private member's bill is a very brief and very clear bill designed with one specific intention in mind, and that is to put the Crime and Corruption Commission back into a position which it and everybody else dealing with the commission understood to be the position for almost 30 years. As I indicated to the committee considering that bill, there are certainly areas that could be improved in relation to the bill. However, from our perspective it does the job. It allows us to publicly report ... That was what we understood would be an appropriate response to the decision in Carne.

The chair of the Crime and Corruption Commission went further. During estimates he stated that he wrote to the Attorney-General on the day of the High Court decision and indicated the need for urgent legislative amendment to correct this issue. He went on to say during estimates that he discussed this several times with the Attorney-General in the lead-up to the review being announced—so many times

that in fact he could not be sure of the number. Further, in estimates, when asked what is the effect of this government continuing to delay to bring these laws in, Mr Barbour stated—

I think it is frustrating beyond just the CCC. I think it is frustrating to parliament. I think it is frustrating to the Queensland community. I think it is not in the public interest. I think there could have been a far speedier resolution to the matter than what there has been. Certainly our concerns about the process and our concerns about recommendations that have been made in the review by the former chief justice, Justice Holmes, have been made clearly to the Attorney.

It could not be more clear than that. There is absolutely no reason for this Labor government not to pass these laws today other than wanting to continue to gag the CCC and to hide corruption reports that might be made public before the next election.

Today we see that Treasurer Dick is at odds with the Premier on this also. When asked whether the CCC should be able to provide critical commentary about politicians, Mr Dick said, 'Of course, they have done so in the past; they will do so in future.' When pressed further on his contradictory position to the review recommendations—which were, I might say, endorsed by Treasurer Dick's and Premier Miles's cabinet—Mr Dick said that he would need to 'go back and see what Holmes actually said before I respond to that'. That is more chaos and crisis from this Labor government.

Multiple reports could be released right now if these laws are passed but this Labor government does not want that. If the Premier and the rest of his government do not support these laws, Queenslanders will know that his desperation has reached the point where he will do anything to cling to power, including keeping potential corruption reports secret. There is an integrity crisis ripping through this Labor government because for the last four years those opposite have been fighting to keep secret a CCC report into former deputy premier and treasurer Jackie Trad. What is worse, they have been using taxpayers' money to do that. That is taxpayers' money to keep secret a CCC report into former deputy premier Jackie Trad.

Queenslanders will not see the Trad report, they will not see the Carne report and they will not see any future reports about investigations into the failed forensic lab nor the Parole Board president's alleged misuse of funds. This will keep secret any findings from an investigation into the potential misuse of taxpayer funds on Minister Boyd's watch because they cannot be released without changes to the law today. Maybe that is why this government will not vote in these laws—because they want to keep secret those corruption reports that relate to Minister Boyd and allegations into the Parole Board president's alleged misuse of funds. This is a protection racket for Labor ministers.

On behalf of Queenslanders, the Premier must explain why he is silencing our state's corruption watchdog in the lead-up to the election. Corruption is seeping through the foundations of this Labor government. If the Premier will not pass this bill today, he will be making it very clear to Queenslanders that he has no intention of mopping up corruption within the government or within his own party. We deserve a government that is truly invested in openness and transparency. Only the LNP has the right priorities for Queensland's future, and that includes transparency, accountability and restoring integrity to government.