




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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INTEGRITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (5.25 pm): I rise to speak on the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I appreciate the opportunity to have a few minutes in the dying moments of this debate, but I note how many other speakers will miss the opportunity to give their contribution on what the government claims is a massive part of the solution to this state's integrity issues. It is disappointing and warrants noting. Nonetheless, the Greens will support the modest reforms in this bill. However, to pretend that the government has made significant positive strides on integrity is frankly a laughable proposition.

The most significant change in this bill is the prohibition on dual hatting for lobbyists. This was a key recommendation of Professor Coaldrake's *Let the sunshine in* report—that you should not have party apparatchiks like Evan Moorhead also acting as professional lobbyists to government. That is especially the case when they are winning contracts with government owned corporations like CleanCo, without tender, after just having helped the government win an election.

Clearly, Labor recognised that this looked bad, which is why they banned three party aligned individuals from lobbying last year. This bill makes it even clearer, I would suggest, that the government is really only concerned with keeping up appearances, not actually limiting corruption. In fact, it is right there in the explanatory notes to the bill. The objectives are, as it reads, to 'address the public perception of undue influence on governments', which is a subtle but important distinction from any more meaningful attempt to actually address undue influence. If that is your objective, it makes sense to leave gaping holes in your integrity regime, just as this bill does.

I will acknowledge that the prohibition on dual hatting is proposed to be strengthened by the amendments. It means that you cannot be a registered lobbyist if you are also playing a substantial role for a political party during an election campaign period or for the next term. I am grateful to see that the government's amendments address the loophole whereby you could just resign six months before an election and then jump straight back into your lobbying role afterwards. However, we are still ultimately just tinkering around the edges of a fundamentally inadequate regime.

It is all very well to say in this bill that registered lobbyists will be subject to conflict-of-interest management processes as part of their code of conduct, but the laws as written continue to allow the most blatant conflicts of interest, on any plain reading of the term. We all know what happens in practice. Business owners, associations, banks, resource corporations and peak bodies, casinos and the property lobby all meet with elected representatives through lobbyist mates or as part of cash-for-access schemes, which remarkably still are not considered corrupt. This bill does nothing to stop the conflicts of interest that arise when our politicians rely on big business donations for their re-election campaigns. The bill does create a requirement for registered lobbyists to undergo certain training, but who must be registered as a lobbyist? In-house lobbying does not need to be registered.

I should note the late distribution of the quite substantial amendments that are proposed. I am sure I will be pulled up by the minister if I say anything that is out of line here or that is actually addressed by the amendments. I would welcome that, but I maintain my scepticism.

In-house lobbying does not need to be registered, nor does lobbying for professional associations like the government's favourite brunch partners, the Real Estate Institute of Queensland, or the former premier Anna Bligh's Australian Banking Association, nor does this framework affect lobbying most non-government politicians, including shadow portfolio holders, as I understand it. The entire backbench, almost every opposition member, and the entire crossbench, plus their staff, still will not be covered by lobbying laws. The Queensland Crime and Corruption Commission flagged this exact issue in their submission. They say that narrow definition creates a regulatory gap which is a corruption risk.

On top of this, the government and opposition representatives still only have a two-year cooling-off period to move into lobbying after stepping down from their role. Essentially, they only need to take a couple of years to catch up with family, take a holiday, maybe take a job at a not-for-profit and then they can slide right on in to the lobbying sector.