



Speech By  
**Dr Christian Rowan**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

---

Record of Proceedings, 10 February 2026

## **ELECTORAL LAWS (RESTORING ELECTORIAL FAIRNESS) AMENDMENT BILL**

### **Second Reading**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (5.33 pm): I rise to address the Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025. This is an important piece of legislation, not only because it implements clear election commitments made to Queenslanders but because it restores balance, strengthens integrity and reinforces confidence in our democratic processes. Queenslanders expect integrity, transparency and fairness when it comes to elections. They expect that the rules governing our democracy apply equally to all participants and that no party, no interest group and no individual is given a structural advantage over another. That is precisely what this legislation seeks to deliver.

This legislation will improve equality of participation in state elections, enhance transparency in electoral campaigning, strengthen civic responsibility and increase public confidence in Queensland's electoral framework. Central to this legislation is ensuring that Queensland's electoral laws are brought back into alignment with the intent of the recommendations from Operation Belcarra.

One of the most significant reforms of this legislation is the restoration of a level playing field in relation to political donations. The previous Labor state government imposed what could only be described as a financial gerrymander—that is, banning a specific class of donors at the state level whilst allowing other institutional donors to continue contributing. That approach created an uneven system and, as the Premier rightly described prior to the election, amounted to a financial and electoral distortion.

Operation Belcarra, which was conducted by the Crime and Corruption Commission, was focused on risks in local government elections. Its recommendations were directed at that level, yet the former Labor state government extended the ban to state elections despite that never being the intent of the report. Accordingly, this legislation corrects that. It restores fairness at the state level whilst importantly maintaining—and, indeed, strengthening—the ban in relation to local government elections. It introduces targeted anticircumvention measures, new offences and strong penalties, including significant financial consequences and potential imprisonment for those who attempt to misuse donations in the local government context. The effect is simple. At the state level, we restore equality between donors and participants. At the local government level, we reinforce safeguards against corruption and undue influence. That is not a weakening of the law; it is a strengthening of it.

Importantly, through this legislation, caps on political donations remain in place, as do expenditure caps and disclosure requirements. These safeguards continue to reduce risks of corruption and undue influence. The reality is that transparency and fairness must apply across the board. It cannot be one rule for one group and another for anyone else.

When speaking about electoral reform, it is impossible to ignore the duplicity and hypocrisy that has characterised this debate—not only from the Labor opposition but from the Greens political party as well. The Greens speak frequently about the influence of big money in politics, yet this is from a party that has accepted some of the largest single donations from wealthy individuals and high-value

contributors. The Greens political party cannot campaign against so-called big money while relying on it when it suits. Queenslanders are entitled to expect consistency between rhetoric and practice. Similarly, the Labor Party has long criticised others on donations and electoral funding, whilst benefiting from significant institutional support, including union linked funding structures that provide a substantial and ongoing campaign base.

I have long held the principle that when it comes to electoral laws and political donations the system must operate on a level playing field. There are those in the community who have expressed the view that all political donations should effectively be banned. I understand that sentiment, and I am certainly sympathetic to many of the arguments that are made in this respect. However, through complex cases and over a long history, it has been established in Australia that political donations are a form of political communication protected by the implied freedom of political communication recognised by the Constitution. Given that reality, the question is not whether donations should exist but whether the rules governing them are fair, transparent and applied consistently. That is the responsibility of this parliament, and that is what this legislation will do.

I note that this legislation also reforms prisoners' voting rights. In line with this state government's commitment to putting victims first, individuals serving a sentence of one year or longer will no longer be eligible to vote in state or local government elections or referendums. This legislation restores a more appropriate balance, consistent with the High Court's position that it is for parliament to determine when serious offending warrants the temporary loss of voting rights. Queenslanders rightly expect that those who commit serious crimes should not, during their incarceration, determine the lawmakers of this state.

This legislation also modernises electoral financing by allowing loans from regulated financial institutions to be used for campaign expenditure. At present, candidates and parties are effectively limited to private or unregulated sources. This reform opens access to reputable, transparent lending and strengthens accountability whilst reducing risk.

I also note that through this legislation there will be alignment on the application of donation caps with financial years, bringing Queensland into line with both the Commonwealth and other state jurisdictions. This simplifies an overly complex system whilst maintaining the same cap amounts and preserving safeguards against undue influence.

Importantly, transparency around election material will also be strengthened by extending authorisation requirements to the 12 months prior to a general election. Currently, authorisation is only required during the formal election period. By extending that time frame, this parliament will ensure that Queenslanders know who is behind political messaging in the months leading up to an election. At the same time, the bill allows the use of post-office boxes and prescribed addresses, responding to legitimate privacy and safety concerns raised by candidates. These reforms promote greater transparency, whilst recognising practical realities.

Taken together, the measures in this legislation demonstrate that the Crisafulli Liberal National Party state government is delivering on its commitments and restoring fairness to our democratic electoral system. This legislation reflects a simple principle: that the rules governing democracy must apply equally to everyone. Queenslanders expect integrity in political funding and electoral processes, they expect transparency, they expect consistency and, above all, they expect fairness. Integrity in political funding cannot be selective. It must apply equally to all parties and to all participants in our democracy.

In closing, I again emphasise the importance of this legislation bringing the laws back to the intent of Operation Belcarra and how it restores balance and strengthens the safeguards that protect public confidence in our elections. This is about ensuring that every voter, every candidate and every party can have confidence that the system is fair, transparent and consistent. This is what Queenslanders voted for at the last state election. This is what this Liberal National Party state government promised and this is what the legislation delivers. As such, I commend the bill to the House.