



Speech By  
**Hermann Vorster**

**MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH**

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

### **Second Reading**

 **Mr VORSTER** (Burleigh—LNP) (5.48 pm): As I rise to speak, I do so after having just marvelled again at the exquisite beauty of this chamber. It is a remarkable building. One of the things that I lament, however, is that for reasons, possibly due to security, we do not have windows from which we can look and take in this beautiful state and ground us in this city. I lament that because at times, as I am sitting in this chamber, my perception of reality can be challenged by those opposite. I wonder: am I really sitting in the state of Queensland, because the Labor opposition would have us believe that they are somehow the bastions of freedom, the custodians of democracy and only they have acted with integrity when dealing with electoral matters. That confuses me because that is certainly not the reality that I have been living in, so if there were windows maybe I could ground myself and remind myself that it is us on this side who can be trusted to handle our democracy with kid gloves—in fact, not just handle that democracy but nourish that democracy.

Before moving to the substantive part of my contribution, which will of course deal with the long title of the bill, it would be remiss of me not to reflect on the contributions of some of those opposite. I do so firstly with respect to the comments from the member for Cooper, who led this impassioned speech advocating for the rights of more prisoners serving longer sentences to be able to vote in Queensland elections. That absolutely astounded me, not only because it is quite offensive to common sensibilities, I would have thought, but because it demonstrates that the Labor opposition will concern itself more with standing up for the rights of perpetrators and those incarcerated for awful crimes than victims. Only by removing perpetrators from the electoral process can we have representatives walking into this space with moral clarity to make decisions that set standards representing those who have been victims and those who aspire for a safer Queensland. I found it remarkable that the member for Cooper would make that contribution, or perhaps it is unremarkable because we know that when Adult Crime, Adult Time was introduced she was so hopelessly conflicted that she threatened to leave the Labor Party. Anyway, I will move on.

The other contribution I want to reflect on is from the member for Macalister. She and I agree on this very minor point, though I am not quite sure whether we are coming at it from the same angle. She said that in this state people have a very dim view of politicians. Can you blame them? After 10 years of decline in this state, as if Queenslanders would have a great view of politicians. How could they? Whenever the former Labor government had an opportunity to keep faith with the people of Queensland by serving their genuine interests and by pursuing policies that mirrored their priorities, they were let down. They were let down on housing and they were let down with the DNA debacle that removed justice from so many. To the member for Macalister, yes, Queenslanders do have a dim view of politicians, but I tell you what: this LNP Crisafulli government is doing a fine job at delivering the fresh start we promised and restoring faith in public institutions.

There can be no institution more important to this great project of ours—the state of Queensland—than a vibrant democracy, yet those opposite did absolutely everything they could to trash that democracy. Not only did they curtail the ability for legitimate actors to speak on issues, but they amplified the cherry-picked voices that they wanted to push their agenda on the state, and of course I am referring to the trade union movement. How is it that Labor can walk in here and pretend to claim moral authority on this issue when it created special privilege for the trade union movement to inject itself into that last state election?

We hear a lot about expenditure caps. Look at how much each individual union could have spent at that last election. How much could they have spent over and above an individual making a single contribution? You can begin to see the outside influence that they wanted the trade union to have, and it begs the question: why did they want that? Because they were completely bought and controlled by the trade union movement. I think about this galling example with the failed former, former, former—whatever he was—transport minister who said at the time that the deal had been done on Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3, but post election we found out that the deal had not been done and it appears as though, if memory serves me correctly, there was a bit of a wait on just to make sure that BPIC could get in place so—

**Ms SCANLON:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): Acting manager of opposition business, what is your point of order?

**Ms SCANLON:** Relevance.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Burleigh, I think you are testing the boundaries somewhat. There is scope to respond to the contributions of others, but this is straying somewhat from the bill. Would you please come back to the long title of the bill in your contribution?

**Mr VORSTER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you so very much for that guidance. I absolutely will act on it and was merely led there by the long title of the bill which talks to restoring fairness when I found it personally unfair that one class of actor in the construction sector could make a financial contribution in an election whereas others could not, but I will move on, other than to perhaps reflect on the fact that the trade union movement has been able to capture the former Labor government as rent seekers and extract extravagant conditions that have prejudiced the interests of taxpayers. What is really galling is that I would not say that they laundered the money but they washed that money through their membership to then make political donations to the ALP, and perhaps that explains to me why the Labor opposition was so keen to preserve the interests of those unions and those laws.

I do want to reflect on a failure of the member for Gaven in her time as the local government minister. I refer to the reforms that we are pursuing to protect the safety of candidates at local government elections. As a former city councillor myself—

**Ms SCANLON:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I believe that the member is referring to another bill that is before the House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you; I will just take some advice. Member for Burleigh, I am not sufficiently across the detail of this matter to be sure, but you are being relevant to this bill. I again encourage you to confine your contribution to the elements of the bill and I encourage you to look at the explanatory notes. The dot points on the front will give you a pretty good indication. I know a number of Speakers in the chair have offered a degree of latitude to speakers—and you will find me so as well—but please take my advice and stick to the points.

**Mr VORSTER:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and of course I will show complete deference to your ruling, though it is my understanding that this bill allows a candidate at a local government election to use a PO box when providing their contact details in an authorisation. If the member for Gaven has that confused with another bill, then I would encourage the member for Gaven to also be familiar with those explanatory notes. Notwithstanding that, I am very glad that we finally have a government prepared to make this reform because at a local government level we have dissuaded too many potential candidates from putting their hand up and creating some competitive tension in our democracy because of the exposure to risk. I will not talk at length about my own personal experience in that space, but suffice to say I was motivated to write to the Local Government Association at the time putting forward this very suggestion. Shortly after my election I met with the LGAQ and I said, ‘You guys did nothing. Can we get this on the agenda?’ It explained to me that it had been sitting on the desk of the member for Gaven under her responsibility at the time and unfortunately never progressed.

Finally we have a Queensland government that is delivering the fresh start we promised. We are injecting vibrancy in our democracy for local government. We are ensuring that there are stiffer penalties for those taking developer donations. We are ensuring that there is an even playing field at a state level.

We are also ensuring that those who are incarcerated for more than one year are not voting at elections—a right that the Labor opposition seems very fiercely keen to defend, quite oddly. Again, we will always put victims first.