




Speech By
Jonty Bush

MEMBER FOR COOPER

Record of Proceedings, 29 April 2025

CRIME AND CORRUPTION (RESTORING REPORTING POWERS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (5.17 pm): I am compelled to speak on this bill after reviewing the amendments introduced today by the Attorney-General. I would hope that even our newest elected members would recognise that the introduction of amendments during the second reading is a chance to make important and clarifying last-minute changes to a bill before it passes, but this government is already making a habit of introducing amendments in consideration in detail that have nothing to do with the bill whatsoever but will guarantee that their changes go through without committee scrutiny and probably without attracting too much stakeholder feedback or media attention. The irony that these amendments have been introduced within an integrity bill by the Minister for Integrity makes a mockery of this House. This government is treating transparency as a nuisance, integrity as optional and Queenslanders as an afterthought.

There are two important issues before us in these amendments today and both reek of arrogance, secrecy and failure. First, the government has moved an amendment today that will formalise the government's decision to indefinitely pause the respect at work reforms. These reforms were essential protections for Queensland workers, particularly for women, to ensure safe, respectful workplaces free from harassment and discrimination. What has this government done without warning, without consultation and without a plan to move forward? They have hit the pause button, leaving Queensland workers vulnerable. The Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Anna Cody, has warned—

There is strong community expectation that workplaces are safe, respectful and equitable. Every delay in implementing these reforms leaves workers vulnerable to harm.

The Independent Education Union-QNT Assistant Secretary Nicole Kapernick stated—

These *Respect at Work* reforms were the result of wide consultation and a clear finding that better protections were needed. Pressing pause on these protections without any clear justification is a shameful political act. While the government dithers, there are working women and survivors of family and domestic violence who are not adequately protected from harassment and discrimination.

Yet this government, with all its spin about the safety of Queenslanders, with its rhetoric about putting victims first, has thrown Queensland workers under the bus.

The Attorney-General has stated there has not been enough consultation, which we know is not true. Equality Australia CEO Anna Brown said the changes were uncontroversial and had already been through a full and comprehensive consultation process that took many years. She said—

Reopening consultation is a waste of time and taxpayer money. Delaying these laws without any real justification is alarming.

She further stated—

The laws offer strengthened protections for so many communities, including LGBTIQ+ people, the homeless and survivors of domestic violence. Serious questions need to be asked about who is pressuring the government to pause these common sense changes that simply modernise Queensland's anti-discrimination laws.

We all know who has been pressuring the government to indefinitely pause this important legislation. I table a statement from the Australian Christian Lobby from September last year which states—

Queensland Labor pulled a death blanket over Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Expression of Religion with the late-night passage of 'The Respect at Work and Other Matters Amendment Bill'. The Australian Christian Lobby calls on the Queensland Liberal National Party to commit to repealing the worst Anti-Discrimination Laws in Australia's history if elected on 26th October.

Tabled paper: Media statement, dated 11 September 2024, from the Australian Christian Lobby regarding freedom of speech and expression of religion [394](#).

Queensland deserves better. It is time this government remembered they are here to serve Queenslanders, not Christian lobby groups. It does not end there, because at the same time, in a stunning display of incompetence, this government is today rushing through further amendments to the Making Queensland Safer Bill. Why? Because they rushed their first bill through the House without proper consultation. They ignored the warnings from experts who cautioned them about these exact issues and now, in a desperate scramble to cover their tracks, they are sneaking amendments into an existing bill, bypassing full committee scrutiny. Laughably, there is a current parliamentary committee inquiry open right now on the making Queensland safer bill 2.0 because they rushed through the first bill and, as we now see, made a range of errors in that bill that we are now having to fix through amendments in consideration in detail.

I heard a number of speakers in the MPI debate earlier today—the members for Cairns, Nicklin and Mundingburra—criticise others for winding back tough laws. What those speakers failed to say is that the Attorney-General is today winding back their own Making Queensland Safer Laws. I wonder how the people in Cairns, Nicklin and Mundingburra would feel about the Attorney-General today moving amendments which will remove the admissibility of restorative justice diversions made before the February commencement date as part of the sentencing considerations for judges sentencing young people who offend.

I am not saying that I disagree with the amendments. In fact, submitters at the time warned the government of precisely these clauses and that these issues would happen, but, of course, the government did not listen to those experts—probably because they were part of the problem, as the Premier keeps stating—which is shameless. It is not good enough to say, 'We made a mistake, but trust us to fix it behind closed doors.' Queenslanders deserve better than a government that hides from scrutiny and makes the rules up as they go along. They deserve a government that treats integrity as a principle, not a PR line. At its core this is about respect—respect for workers, respect for those working in the justice system and respect for the Queensland public. On both fronts, this government has failed today.

We support the objectives of the CCC Act; however, rushing through substantial amendments relating particularly to the safety of workers in this manner is incredible. Queenslanders are starting to see through it.