



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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ELECTORAL LAWS (RESTORING ELECTORIAL FAIRNESS) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Mr J KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (6.17 pm): I rise to make a contribution in this very important debate. In fact, the issues at the core of this debate were part of my original motivation for developing an interest in politics as a young fella.

Mr Furner: You're still a young fella.

Mr J KELLY: I am still a young fella; I take that interjection. Like many on this side of the House, I gained political consciousness during a time when this state was riddled with corruption. I saw the impacts that had on ordinary people. I saw the impacts it had on the unions that were trying to help me, people like me and people I knew to live a better life. Thanks to leaders such as Wayne Goss, I saw there was another way.

Corruption is a terrible and corrosive force in any society. Transparency is one of the cures for corruption and transparency is one of the core aspects of any functioning democracy. Accountability and transparency are things that David Crisafulli and the LNP like to talk about a lot and chant as their mantra that apparently guides every single one of their moves. However, I cannot see that mantra at work in this bill. In fact, I would probably scrap the name of this bill, the Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025, and call it something like 'Jarrod's law (donate baby, donate baby) amendment law'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lister): Member for Greenslopes, I ask you to come back to the long title of the bill—not debate the long title of the bill but speak to the long title of the bill—and use correct titles in this place.

Mr J KELLY: I was just foreshadowing a possible amendment, Deputy Speaker. I want to do a bit of comparing and contrasting. During a decade of respecting the Crime and Corruption Commission and building on over 20 years of reforms to increase integrity, transparency and accountability, Labor reduced the threshold for donation disclosure to \$1,000, implemented real-time disclosure laws and implemented the recommendations of the Crime and Corruption Commission to prohibit property developers from making donations.

Compare that to the mercifully short Newman period when we had the Karreman Quarries affair—'Blow those FLPs; let's just make those laws retrospective and go out there and make some money.' Who could forget Sibelco sending over \$90,000 worth of letters into Ashgrove? I will tell members who did not forget it: Sibelco. What about the lovely caravan park on the Maroochy River rezoned by the minister against the wishes of the local council, leading to a very nice and tidy value uplift?

It is clear from the Crime and Corruption Commission submission that they have a few issues with these laws. I would have thought that a government like the Crisafulli government that is committed to transparency and accountability would listen to the views of the state's peak anti-corruption body. Not only did they not listen; we found out through the rushed committee process for this bill—it was

slipped through during the Yuletide season; Merry Christmas, everyone—that the government did not even ask the question. They put in place laws that are completely contrary to the views of our state's No. 1 corruption watchdog.

That is staggering. Perhaps Premier David Crisafulli and the struggling Attorney-General think they are tough for standing up against the woke CCC—not just ignoring their advice but not even seeking it. Remember when the Premier was thumping his chest and pandering to the far-right extremists standing up to the UN? I thought it was hilarious. I am sure Antonio Guterres lost some sleep that night! Not content to stop at the UN, we saw today that the sports minister is now taking on the IOC and intends to overrule them. Perhaps rather than having adversarial relationships with the UN, the IOC and the CCC, this government might be better to work in partnership with all organisations.

I do want to get back to this bill and this issue. When you thump your chest and stand up to the CCC, when you not only ignore them but do not even ask for their advice, you do not look clever, you do not look tough, you do not look anti-woke. I can tell you what you look like. You look dodgy. If you look dodgy, you probably are dodgy.

I will deal with this notion that the CCC and the committee could not find a date to meet that was suitable for both of them. I have been on many committees that have bent over backwards to allow a witness to appear. When dealing with what many would perceive to be the most important witness for this bill, one would think that they would try a little harder to get them into the room. Again, if you look dodgy, you probably are dodgy.

I also find it interesting that Mr Geoffrey Watson SC, Director of the Centre for Public Integrity, has deep concerns about this bill. How many times have we heard him lauded for investigating and exposing corruption in the construction industry? I think a guy who had a really hard look at the construction industry should probably be listened to if he is saying something like—

I'm very disappointed because this is quite a retrograde step, not only does it reintroduce the possible corrupting influence of property developers, but it also greatly enhances the amount which they can donate to a campaign, thus increasing their power of influence.

It is fine for them to listen to him on the CFMEU but not on property developers. It seems like a glaring double standard to me. Much like the CCC, Mr Watson can rest assured he has been completely ignored.

I want to talk about developers because I like developers. Labor likes developers. They build things that we need. They take risks and they work in tough environments. I have a good relationship with many local developers and I listen to them when they talk to me. I do not listen to them because they pay me. I listen to them because they live or work in my community. Do members know who else I listen to? Do members know who else Labor listens to? We listen to the CCC.

This bill will quadruple the amount of money flowing around Queensland politics from private sources. Do members know who else I listen to? I listen to my constituents, and they clearly do not support going backwards on this issue. In fact, many of them are watching with interest what South Australian Labor is doing in relation to this, and I am certainly watching that too.

Corruption is clearly a crucial element of these laws, but we should also not forget that the core of these debates is the ability for all Queenslanders to participate in elections. That gets a lot harder when someone with the mantra 'donate, baby, donate' is doing dodgy deals to fill his election war chest. Like a lot of people on this side of the House, I come from a background that is sufficient to meet my needs but that would probably not have afforded me the opportunity to participate in this parliament or represent my community if I was relying solely on my income and my personal connections. I will be forever thankful for the union members and party members who helped someone like me get this opportunity, and some of that came through them helping me to raise money. Whenever we consider these laws or donation laws, we need to ensure that everybody can have a chance to participate fully in democracy. I will certainly be watching what South Australian Labor do.

These laws certainly have the capacity to unbalance the scales of fairness in Queensland politics and that will be detrimental in the long term for our state. One only has to be my age to have lived through this before.

I will now speak to the section of the bill that deals with voting rights for prisoners. I have Stepping Stone Clubhouse in my electorate. They work to empower people who live with mental health issues. I have volunteered for Inspiring Brighter Futures. They help people of all ages to build better lives by exploring and developing their values to make better choices.

Over the years, I have met a number of people who have found themselves in prison. Something that started out as pretty minor, often ignored or poorly managed or poorly understood, resulted in a person ending up in prison. It is not rare for this to occur for people with mental health issues or

intellectual disabilities. Just check the statistics, as they speak for themselves. I absolutely support victims receiving full support and justice. Guilty parties should be penalised to the fullest extent of the law, but if we truly want to reduce victims we need to ensure people can rebuild their lives. Of course, this goes against everything most of us instinctively feel. However, if we truly want to reduce victims, we need to reduce perpetrators. Organisations like Stepping Stone Clubhouse and Inspiring Brighter Futures show that people can rebuild their lives.

It is why Sue and Lloyd Clarke put so much focus on offender and perpetrator programs in addition to their support for survivors of domestic violence, not to mention their amazing work in relation to coercive control. Every step we take to disenfranchise and dehumanise people just makes all of this harder. Every time we dehumanise someone we make it easier for that person to continue to operate outside the boundaries of our society.

Is a person suffering from an untreated mental health condition, failed by our health and social welfare systems, who finds themselves in a prison for over a year for a series of relatively minor matters really the person we should be demonising and saying that these laws should be tackling? I think breaking this argument down to a simple dichotomy of 'support this amendment or you are soft on crime' is the absolute epitome of rhetorical laziness. Stick with three years and then organisations like Stepping Stone Clubhouse and Inspiring Brighter Futures will have less work to do when they start supporting people attempting to rebuild their lives and will continue to contribute to reducing victim numbers.

Maybe I will get my amendment up later. Maybe we will change the name of this bill, but it does raise a lot of concerns for submitters, particularly the CCC, who deserve to be listened to. It certainly raises concerns for my community and it certainly raises concerns for Labor. It seems to fly in the face of the government's stated intention of standards of accountability and transparency. Most concerningly for me personally, it seems to be taking us backwards to a time that I thought we would never see again. It seems to be taking Queensland in a direction that we should never go in again.