



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

Record of Proceedings, 10 February 2026

ELECTORAL LAWS (RESTORING ELECTORIAL FAIRNESS) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Ms McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (3.55 pm): I rise to make my contribution in relation to the bill before the House, and I do so as a member of the committee that considered the bill. For those who are unaware, this bill was introduced in the last sitting week before Christmas and submitters were given the Christmas holiday leave to make their submissions to the committee. The Attorney-General has spoken about the length of time the committee had to scrutinise this bill. I am sure the Attorney-General was at work every day and expected all of those organisations and public servants to also be at work every single day to make sure their submissions were done in time. That is the level of scrutiny that was allowed for this bill.

We are here debating what is now an urgent bill. The LNP's priority is clearly to open up donations and repeal some of the current caps on donations. That is the LNP's priority for the first sitting day in 2026. I have heard that this is a mandate and an election commitment. We all heard lots of slogans at the polling booth in 2024, but I do not recall hearing, 'We need more dollars in the pockets of property developers' as voters were taking the how-to-vote cards from a range of different people. I would suggest there were other mandates that the punters themselves were actually interested in, not these dodgy ones.

Queensland has some of the highest anti-corruption frameworks around politics in the country, and I am very proud to have been part of the government that introduced many of those. That was about curbing the influence of money in public sector decision-making. During the committee process, the Australia Institute was asked how our state compares with many other states. The concern was articulated that with this bill Queensland is the only state going backwards in terms of transparency and corruption risk.

The public's perception of politicians and corruption predates many of us in this House. All of us here carry the weight of the esteemed title of the least trusted profession in Australia. There is a reason for that perception, and bills like this will only continue that perception. This bill does not pass the pub test. If I went out and told my punters that the first bill we debated and passed in 2026 was to remove property developer caps and increase money to go into political campaigns, they would be absolutely appalled. This bill is about electoral matters and it is now an urgent bill, and that shows us what the LNP's priority is for Queensland. We are the only state going backwards in terms of anti-corruption measures. This is not a perceived corruption risk; this is a corruption risk.

We did not have the privilege of having the CCC appear before the committee. They certainly foreshadowed late last year that they would be unable to attend on 16 January. Maybe they were all on leave as well; maybe there was a group discount on safaris. Who knows where they all were, but there were still two weeks between that public hearing and the tabling of the report. As the CCC were not

available to appear at the hearing, many members may not be aware of the comments from the CCC. I will highlight some of the points from their submission. It is not a really long submission, but it does get to the crux of the problems here. The submission states—

The CCC's investigation revealed widespread non-compliance with legislative obligations relating to local government elections ...'

This refers to the Belcarra report. I do hear a lot of commentary that the Belcarra report and its recommendations did not refer to state government, that they were local government election issues. That is because that was the remit of the Belcarra report.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Order, members on my right.

Ms McMAHON: However, one of the outcomes of the Belcarra report was more state government influence in project approvals. In line with the measures that were put in place in the local government area, a lot of decision-making capacity was put into the state government area, particularly around major developments. This included the increased use of ministerial infrastructure designations, the power that the planning minister now holds to approve developments over the top of local governments.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. Could you ask the member to come back to the bill, please?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I notice that the member is actually addressing issues that have been raised directly in the committee report and the dissenting report as well. Will the member please continue?

Ms McMAHON: The Belcarra report has been frequently referenced throughout the report on the bill and in other contributions today. I continue.

The number of decisions that are being made, specifically in property developers' interests, are now sitting at the state government level. We now have the biggest infrastructure spend this state has ever seen going into 2032. The people of Queensland are not stupid. The people of Queensland can do the maths. When you remove developer donation bans and you add that to handing over state owned land to developers and you remove requirements for affordable and social housing, who benefits from that? It is not Queenslanders. Queenslanders are not going to benefit from affordable and social housing when that is being removed. Queenslanders who are struggling to get into the housing market are not going to benefit from increased developer donations as well as the lifting of that cap. Let's talk about donations.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please resume your seat for a moment. The number of interjections is rising. I have asked members twice now to maintain order. I will start warning people if this continues. Please resume.

Ms McMAHON: The people of Queensland have an already fractured view of politics and the influence of money in politics. It means that any step we take backwards increases the likelihood of organisations and companies that exist solely for profit being the ones to benefit from changes, submissions and amendments like these. I put a lot more stock in the intelligence of Queenslanders to see through what is actually happening here. I am more than happy to go back to my electorate and say that today the government has introduced a bill to increase donations so they are going to see more political ephemera in campaigns and they are also going to see more developers benefitting from decisions.

The last part of the bill I want to talk to briefly is the restrictions on prisoner voting. I want to clarify. A lot of the offences that have been rattled off as examples of offences that would be captured under the more than one year imprisonment—yes, they are all rattling off indictable offences. However, the ones I have heard today are all seven-plus year offences, anyway. They are not in that little area of those that would not have been captured previously. Generally when we are talking about an indictable offence we are talking about those offences that have a term of imprisonment of seven years or more. However, we are talking about the simple offences, not just summary offences. Yes, we have a Summary Offences Act and generally they all have a term of imprisonment of 12 months maximum, so most summary offences are not going to be included. However, there are a lot of simple offences in the Criminal Code that are three-year offences, including things such as discrimination or harassment of people based on gender identity or sexuality. That is a three-year offence. I hear a lot of public rhetoric that these are just as serious offences—and do not get me wrong, sexual vilification is a serious matter and it needs to be dealt with seriously. However, it is also a three-year imprisonment offence.

Those are the types of serious offences that are also being captured, not just the high-end indictable offences. People are always going to go away for a period of time that would have triggered that ineligibility. This has also now made Queensland vulnerable to a High Court challenge. I am certainly not going to be happy to put my hand on my heart and say that this bill and these amendments would withstand a High Court challenge regardless of some of the rulings. I look forward to seeing how this withstands that and how much this is going to cost Queenslanders.