




Speech By  
**Michael Berkman**

**MEMBER FOR MAIWAR**

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Record of Proceedings, 29 April 2025

**CRIME AND CORRUPTION (RESTORING REPORTING POWERS) AMENDMENT  
BILL**

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (4.29 pm): I rise to contribute to the Crime and Corruption (Restoring Reporting Powers) Amendment Bill. I want to begin by addressing not the substantive bill but the significant changes to completely unrelated legislation which were circulated just this morning. These late changes are not minor, technical or administrative amendments; they are really substantial changes.

Given the limited time I have now I will just flag very quickly that I will not be opposing the changes to the Evidence Act in relation to the admissibility of preliminary complaint evidence, nor the changes to ensure that certainty in A samples can be retained for longer periods of time to deal with the testing backlog. Of course, I would have liked to hear from stakeholders and experts in the area of forensic testing and privacy to understand if that extended retention period is, in fact, appropriate in all the circumstances. However, I guess I, like everyone else here, will just have to do without that because clearly these clowns do not give a toss about proper parliamentary process or scrutiny. We are left with a short period of time to consider such significant amendments.

The most egregious amendment was tacked on to the very back of the amendments that the AG circulated. In just two months time really significant and overdue protections under the respect at work legislation were set to commence and now the LNP wants to indefinitely delay those protections coming into force. Stakeholders have been anxiously expecting this, but they certainly have not been sitting on their hands waiting around. They have been preparing to weigh in and share their critical perspective about what the changes would mean for working women and for all Queenslanders who face discrimination within the community and when seeking to access government services. However, the LNP just does not want to hear it because they know that Queenslanders have fought hard for these protections. First they had to push Labor hard to do the right thing, and now the LNP is going to pull the rug clean out from underneath them without even affording the community a chance to be heard.

These changes would have protected Queenslanders from discrimination where it arises as a result of experiencing family violence and homelessness or because of a person's physical appearance, an expunged conviction or an irrelevant criminal or medical record. They would have protected people experiencing intersectional disadvantage and discrimination, recognising, for example, that a woman who is First Nations and who is subject to family violence may be experiencing compounding and unique discrimination.

These changes would have modernised the definitions of direct and indirect discrimination to bring us into alignment with other jurisdictions. Significantly, the changes that were due to commence soon would have prohibited harassment on the basis of sex and put in place protections for women in work environments made hostile on the basis of sex. Not only that, they would have placed a positive duty on workplaces, service providers and governments to take all reasonable steps to eliminate discrimination and sexual harassment with specific powers granted to the Human Rights Commission to publish guidance, to investigate and to seek undertakings in relation to noncompliance with that duty.

They would have updated the meaning of vilification and expanded criminal laws in relation to serious vilification consistent with the recommendations of the inquiry into serious vilification and hate crimes. These changes could have radically transformed our communities, encouraging a culture of non-discrimination and preventing sexual harassment and vilification rather than just responding to these harms. Moreover, the changes would have granted complainants a critical additional 12 months to bring complaints. For many people who have experienced discrimination and sexual harassment, it can take years to recover enough to feel ready to take action.

Delaying these changes is plain despicable. It is unjustifiable. The LNP just keeps showing us its true face without batting an eye. They do not govern for the most disadvantaged or the most vulnerable people. They do not govern for First Nations people or communities. They do not govern for women exposed to harassment in their workplaces. They clearly do not govern for our kids, who need safety and protection, nor do they govern for people who are homeless or who are experiencing domestic and family violence. If they will not govern for them, they sure as eggs will not govern for you either—that is unless you are a mining CEO, a gambling lobbyist, a developer or a supermarket executive.

I firmly support the objectives of the Crime and Corruption Act to continuously improve the integrity of, and reduce the incidence of corruption in, the public sector.

Moving on to the substantive bill, I can say that is why I stand here as a member of the Queensland Greens, the only party that refuses corporate donations. We refuse to be influenced by multinational conglomerates, fossil fuel companies, the racing and gambling sector and property developers. If there was a single Labor or LNP member in this chamber who was serious about corruption, they would not be representing a party that accepts corporate donations and corporate influence over their party.

Amendments to this bill will allow the Crime and Corruption Commission to publish and report on its investigations, which is a welcome change. I want to acknowledge at the outset the concerns raised by some submitters that there is no strict requirement for the CCC to make any substantive finding before it can report on a matter and the potential opportunity this represents for weaponising mere allegations without evidence. The commission is proposed to have a broad discretion to make public statements and publish reports, though it would be bound by the Human Rights Act and under this bill would be required to take into account a list of factors before exercising this discretion. I am somewhat inclined to agree that it would be preferable to see stricter criteria and a more constrained discretion, especially where information is being released before a matter is finalised. The potential impact on the subject of an allegation is immense and any release should carefully weigh the public interest or public benefit against any potential harm. Nonetheless, the requisite considerations and the effect of the Human Rights Act, I believe, provide the necessary safeguard and I consider these are adequate for the purpose of allowing the passage of the bill in the interests of improving transparency.

This bill, though, has to be considered in light of the limited investigation powers of the CCC, which flow directly through to the commission's reporting powers. So long as corporate donations to political parties exist and so long as Labor and Liberal politicians continue to accept not just free lunches, corporate boxes or cash for access, but cushy post-parliament jobs in boardrooms and as lobbyists, corruption will continue to exist in Queensland.

Both of the major parties have accepted huge donations from the gambling industry. Between 2013 and 2023 Tabcorp donated more than \$1 million to the two major parties, and since June 2020 Sportsbet has donated upwards of \$600,000 to Labor and the LNP. I would say it is not surprising then that Labor's second Senate candidate is a former Star casino lobbyist and that government funding to racing has quadrupled in the last decade. In the last 10 years across the state and federal levels, mining, energy and resource companies have donated \$26 million to Labor and the LNP. It is not surprising then that Labor and the LNP continue to approve new coal and gas projects.

Let's pause to reflect for a moment on the Cormack Foundation, an investment group set up to fund the LNP that has itself now made a \$500,000 donation to Advance Australia in an attempt to take down the Greens, matching donations made by billionaire Gina Rinehart. The major parties and their big money influencers are desperate to take out the Greens because they are desperate to keep the gravy train rolling. They are desperate to keep the revolving door between politics and cushy executive officers and boardrooms well greased and spinning as fast as it can. In fact, I would suggest—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Whiting): I know you are talking on the theme of integrity, but you have strayed into areas I have not heard covered yet. I remind you to keep on target with the speech. Please resume.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Thank you for your guidance. Those of us who participated in the committee hearings in the inquiry on this bill heard a substantial amount of commentary about the limited powers of the CCC and the hard limits that exist on their investigative powers as a consequence of the definitions of 'corrupt conduct'.

It is arguable that the revolving door between politics and those post-political roles does not even exist anymore. The corporate mates of these big parties are almost operating out of the same shopfront: former Labor leader Anna Bligh is now the head of the banking lobby in Australia and, until last year, former Liberal minister Ian Macfarlane literally ran the Queensland Resources Council—the industry's lobby in this state—and he followed a similar path to Labor's former federal resources minister Martin Ferguson who, just six months after leaving office, was the chairman of the national oil and gas lobby. Labor and the Liberals say that they care about transparency, but the details of government dealings are always shrouded in secrecy under commercial in confidence. They have been stretched well beyond the point of meaning anything, so not only do we not know what dealings are going on but we are not even entitled to use the Right to Information Act to access them. If these guys want to get serious about integrity, let us go beyond reporting and look at the Crime and Corruption Commission's powers.

*(Time expired)*