




Speech By
Rob Molhoek

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Record of Proceedings, 29 April 2025

CRIME AND CORRUPTION (RESTORING REPORTING POWERS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (8.45 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Crime and Corruption (Restoring Reporting Powers) Amendment Bill 2025. This bill seeks to restore the openness, transparency and accountability that Queenslanders expect. I want to acknowledge the member for Greenslopes because he has given me the licence to speak a little bit off track in referring to traumatic experiences of his youth and, I suspect, a failed relationship or perhaps he was spurned by some young lady at some point. I want to share a similar experience that I had, although mine was not as disastrous.

My introduction to politics came through being invited to attend a rally at the Chermside shopping centre back in the early seventies when a bus load of machinists from a factory on the Gold Coast travelled to Brisbane to protest at an event where Gough Whitlam was speaking about the need to lift tariffs or to reduce tariffs that directly affected the clothing industry and destroyed much of the clothing industry in Australia. My experience was not quite so heartbreaking. I actually met a young lady whom I had the pleasure of going out with for a year or two. As we were coming back from the rally the song that was playing on the radio that was very memorable, that wonderful love ballad with the lyrics 'everybody was kung fu fighting'. That was the beginning of my involvement with the then National Party and the conservative side of politics.

I want to move on from that romantic experience to another, and it was not so romantic! A few years later I became quite good friends with a young lady in Rockhampton whose father went on to become one of the discredited Labor leaders of the day, and that was Keith Wright. There were a litany of Labor leaders: there was Gordon Nuttall, there was Bill D'Arcy. Therefore, it is a little guiling, I suppose, to sit in the House and hear Labor members railing about the evil days of the Joh Bjelke-Petersen era when we have seen so many failures over so many years of successive Labor governments to adequately deal with and support the work of the Crime and Corruption Commission. I refer to the Kimmins report of the late 1990s—and I think it was the Labor government that was in power back then—which dealt with allegations of misconduct in the investigation of paedophilia in Queensland, and we have seen some dismal failures by successive governments to adequately support the work of the CCC, or the CJC as it was known back then. One of the issues that was raised in that report was that there were significant failures in supporting the investigations into paedophilia in Queensland and some of those investigations were seriously mishandled.

When I was first elected, a member of my local community came to see me. She was a former police officer whose life had been destroyed because of the mishandling of reports that she and a whole team of police officers had put together that looked into paedophilia around the time of Expo 88. On the day that they presented their reports to the then police minister, they returned to their office to find that filing cabinets had been removed and a lot of the evidence that they had gathered had disappeared. Sadly, her reputation and that of other very faithful and enduring police officers were destroyed because

of the corruption of successive governments over the years. Therefore, this bill is important. In some respects, I wish that this was not a unicameral parliament so that every time there is a change of government we cannot not flip-flop around and change the rules.

I want to comment on the excellent contribution of the member for Mermaid Beach, Ray Stevens. He talked about some of his experiences. I have experienced similar things. I saw the Crime and Misconduct Commission used well. I think the report that they did back in the early 2000s into child safety practices across Queensland was an excellent report. However, over time I have also seen referrals to the varying bodies misused to discredit people unfairly and to cause reputational harm. In 2005, the Gold Coast city council was subjected to an inquiry by the then Beattie government, which basically ran up a dry gully. Nothing of any consequence came out of that, but it was a great way to distract people from the failings of the then Beattie government at a time when they thought that they were likely to lose the 2005 election.

We have seen many misuses of the Crime and Corruption Commission and its predecessors over the years. Therefore, it is important that we have legislation that does empower them and gives them a clear mandate to report to the people of Queensland through the parliament and to do that in a way that is fearless and frank, but also with sensible controls around making sure that they do not unfairly discredit people along the way. This bill secures many of the safeguards that I believe all of us in this House want to see put in place. It ensures that the CCC acts independently, impartially, with fairness and always with the public interest in mind. This should not be about punishment and it should not be about politics; it should be about transparency and the public's right to know. The bill also strengthens procedural fairness for individuals named in reports. If the CCC intends to include adverse findings, it must give the individual involved the chance to respond, with clear timeframes and the ability to seek a review in the Supreme Court.

We are also ensuring that the CCC cannot and does not make legal findings of corrupt conduct. That has always been the case. This bill simply clarifies that the CCC's role is investigative. The decision to prosecute or take disciplinary action rests with the relevant authority. Importantly, this legislation respects the independence of the CCC.

The decision to table a report will rest with the commission itself and not with the government of the day. Once the commission provides a report to the Speaker and the PCCC, that report must be tabled at the next sitting of parliament or published by the Clerk of the Parliament if it is not sitting. Unlike Labor's proposal, our bill also validates past CCC reports and public statements. That means Queenslanders will once again have access to those reports, including the ones Labor tried so desperately to keep hidden.

We are restoring faith in our institutions, we are restoring the CCC's ability to do its job and we are restoring integrity in public office. At its core, this bill is about accountability, not just for those under investigation but also for governments themselves. It brings to a close a dark chapter of secrecy and political interference and it reaffirms the principle that no-one is above the law.

The Crisafulli government made a promise to clean up Queensland politics and we are keeping that promise. This is a necessary bill and it is a bill that puts Queenslanders first. My sincere hope is that it is a bill that will stick—that it will not be subjected to the changes and whims of governments of the day but that all future governments will respect the important role that the CCC plays and should play in looking after the people of Queensland in every respect. I commend this bill to the House.