



Speech By  
**Russell Field**

**MEMBER FOR CAPALABA**

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## **ELECTORAL LAWS (RESTORING ELECTORIAL FAIRNESS) AMENDMENT BILL**

### **Second Reading**

 **Mr FIELD** (Capalaba—LNP) (4.05 pm): I rise to address the House on the Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025. This bill delivers on our commitment to Queenslanders to restore balance, consistency and fairness to our electoral system. This bill was referred to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee which, after hearing from various stakeholders, recommended that the bill be passed.

A core pillar of this bill is the restriction of voting rights for prisoners. Following legislation passed under the former Labor government, prisoners who were serving jail sentences of less than three years would be allowed a say in the democratic process. We are reversing those changes because they are an insult to victims right across the state. This means that prisoners serving a sentence greater than one year will be restricted from voting at state and local government elections and referendums. We believe that law-breakers should not get to elect our lawmakers; it is a very simple idea.

Participation in a democracy is a blend of rights and responsibilities. When the individual demonstrates a serious disregard for the law, they forfeit certain civic privileges for the duration of their sentence. This is a standard principle with deep roots in the western legal and philosophical traditions. The 17th century English philosopher John Locke argued the social contract relies on individuals adhering to the laws of a civil society. When a person commits a serious crime they essentially enter what Locke described as a state of war against that society, thereby forfeiting the ability to vote that they enjoyed under that contract.

As Chief Justice Gleeson noted in *Roach v Electoral Commissioner*, it is fundamentally a matter for parliament to decide which prisoners have committed a serious enough offence to temporarily lose that right. By setting a 12-month threshold, we align with this commonsense principle that those who commit serious crimes such as burglary, assault occasioning bodily harm or sexual assault should not influence the laws that govern law-abiding citizens while they are serving their time. It is important to note that it will also apply to adults who were originally sentenced to detention as juveniles. This provision will bring Queensland into line with other states such as New South Wales and Western Australia, which share similar laws.

Furthermore, this bill fulfils our commitment to restore a level playing field for political donations. For too long the former Labor government maintained, as the Premier remarked, a 'financial gerrymander', creating one set of rules for trade unions and an entirely different, restrictive set for others. The Premier has been clear: there should be an even playing field where everybody follows the same rules. By lifting the state-level ban on property developers, we are ensuring that all donors are treated equally under the law, enhancing freedom of political expression.

Let me be clear: we are maintaining a strict ban on property developer donations for local government elections. This aligns with the original intent of the CCC's Operation Belcarra, which was always focused on local government, not state government, elections. We are strengthening this with new offences and anti-circumvention measures, including penalties of up to two years imprisonment for those who attempt to use state-intended developer donations for local purposes.

To strengthen fairness, we are introducing annualised donation caps. By bringing donation periods into line with the financial year—consistent with New South Wales and the Commonwealth—we are streamlining an overly complex system and providing Queenslanders with greater opportunities to show their political support. We are also enabling candidates and political parties to obtain loans from regulated financial institutions. At present, participants are unfairly limited to private or unregulated lenders. No candidate should have to rely on questionable sources of finance simply to participate in our democracy; they should be able to access credible and regulated lending.

This bill further reinforces the independence of political parties by removing the Electoral Commission's role in overseeing the preselection process. Such oversight is an outdated administrative requirement that exists in no other Australian jurisdiction. Its removal will allow the ECQ to focus on its primary responsibility: administering public elections rather than supervising internal party affairs.

Finally, we are prioritising the transparency of our elections and the safety of our candidates. We are extending the authorisation requirement for election material to 12 months prior to a general election, ensuring Queenslanders know exactly who is behind the advertisements they see. Crucially, we are now allowing candidates to use PO boxes or prescribed addresses for these authorisations. In an era of growing concerns regarding harassment and intimidation, no candidate should be forced to put their private residential address on public campaign material. This bill is about integrity. It is about ensuring that victims are prioritised over criminals, that donation rules are fair to everyone and that our electoral system is transparent and safe. I commend the bill to the House.