



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Parliamentary Procedures

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (2.57 pm): With the government nearing its one-year anniversary, how have we fared in terms of the reforms needed for Queensland to restore trust in our governance systems, democracy and politics? As I have raised previously, our parliament is not living up to what its role should be. Harry Evans, the longest serving clerk of the Australian Senate, has said that legislating means making laws and conducting inquiries as well as disclosing information necessary to ensure capable and honest government. Basically, he highlighted the crucial role of parliament and parliamentary inquiries for shining light on the legislative process and on the government of the day. Since 2019, the crossbench, the current government when in opposition and I sought committee and estimates reforms to fulfil that role as Mr Evans outlined.

During elections, our new government promised to overhaul the estimates process. However, all we have achieved is a different but not independent chair and a reversal of positive reforms that had already been secured. Chamber content has also gone backwards with the loss of the regular crossbench private member's motion, in effect denying debate on the diverse topics important to our communities.

In addition, voices remain muffled or unheard when topics are banned or when legislation is inserted at the last minute or pushed through during consideration in detail. Bypassing the appropriate, though flawed, scrutiny of committees that ensure Queenslanders' voices are heard is just plain wrong. We could fix all of this through an independent review of the operations of parliament. The current model of the CLA is insufficient due to its dominance by the two major parties that ultimately, as we have seen—and it does not matter which one is in power—are not supportive of changes that may diminish their ability to circumvent those processes.

Regardless of previous calls, chamber behaviour has not improved. I will continue to raise that we, as leaders, must set the example for our children, our grandchildren and all Queenslanders. This is imperative to bring back respect and trust within our communities and it is up to every single one of us to demonstrate how it is done.

Where are the reforms to our electoral laws such as South Australia's banning of donations to registered parties, MPs and candidates? What about the content of election materials and advertising and those misleading reply-paid envelopes for postal vote applications that also need to be dealt with to rebuild trust? Nowhere is it to be seen. In other states and the Commonwealth there are bipartisan reviews of elections; however, in Queensland we have the Electoral Commission reviewing itself, which is insufficient.

Independent reviews, whether of elections or disasters, as routinely occur in other jurisdictions, are essential for transparency, accountability and building trust. That is where we need to get to. That there was no appropriate Queensland review of our pandemic response or our housing crisis, as is

done with our fires and floods, is a major failing. We need to know what we do well and what needs to be improved on such as capability gaps in the public sector as part of effective disaster management. I am sure everyone in this House wants to see that.

The report *Fault lines: an independent review into Australia's response to COVID-19* identified several key issues in public administration, particularly in terms of seeking broader advice, transparency and collaboration. While the formal recommendations of Professor Coaldrake's 2022 review into public sector accountability have been reported as implemented, the 'asks' and 'shoulds' still await. It is imperative that Professor Coaldrake be invited back to consider these and provide a report on progress and further steps that need to be taken.

Regarding access to information, we are meant to have a push model for government to routinely and proactively push information into the public domain, instead of waiting for freedom of information requests to pull that information out. Queenslanders need this. As well, we need statistics and data that come from an independent source that are easy to understand, comparable to other jurisdictions and remove the ability for either side of the House to manipulate and cherry-pick. How do we ever know what we are achieving when what is presented can be skewed to suit a particular narrative?

To move Queensland forward we need these long-sought-for reforms. If not, where do we go? Is it the reintroduction of the upper house? Communities have had enough of politics that is about power and control instead of where it needs to be: about people.