



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Queensland Parliament, Upper House

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (2.52 pm): Over 100 years ago the Queensland government of the day abolished our upper house against the will of the majority of Queenslanders, leaving us as the only unicameral state. Has this led to the lack of transparency and scrutiny; a rise in voter disengagement; mistrust in governments; movements such as sovereign citizens; loopholes in chamber standing orders and rules that silence and sideline communities; or poor behaviours of parties, MPs and media which can all foster misinformation and misunderstandings, amplified further by social engineering via AI?

Democracy is vital. However, we have some structural issues, with the executive of government, ministers, departments and agencies able to operate in what has been termed an elective dictatorship. Our current government back in 2009 recognised this and committed to a reintroduction of an upper house. This never eventuated, with the rationale being that the reviewed committee system would address the shortfalls. It obviously has not, with research and a report by the Institute of Public Affairs in 2020 determining that three structural deficits exist in our accountability, democracy and regional representation.

Regardless of how hardworking the opposition of the day is to ensure transparency and accountability of governments, the system itself makes it near impossible. On-the-fly, slogan oriented legislation to fit election campaigns can be pushed through, sold in advertising paid for by taxpayers to be then overturned at a change of government through the same flawed process. As outlined in the IPA report, party dominance means the majority of MPs must adhere to party policy, not to the wishes of their electorate. Hence, parties and those who fund them determine the composition of the executive, with parliament rendered a tool of the executive, not of the people.

In 1910 the Legislative Assembly passed a resolution that Queensland be divided into north, central and southern Queensland. In 2010 all but two mayors supported a separate North Queensland state. The question is: why this ongoing push for change? Obviously something is not working. The report recommended the reintroduction of an upper house. This could restore our parliament to being the people's house, as intended.

That decision over a hundred years ago in defiance of a state referendum has left a permanent stain on Queensland's democracy. Ultimately, if governments are not prepared for our committee system and standing orders and rules to be independently reviewed—that is an economical solution—the question is: will the reintroduction of an upper house address our deficits? To find out, let's have an inquiry—let the people of Queensland speak—and remove that stain.