



Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (8.01 pm): I rise in strong support of the Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill. At the outset I remind the House of our election commitments, particularly to restore public confidence in the Queensland electoral process. I also remind the House of our commitment to prioritise victims over criminals. By honouring those commitments the bill intends to rectify changes made by the previous government in early 2020 that allowed many criminals to vote in our elections. This was unacceptable, and rightly so. This has highlighted how insulting this was to victims across the state. To use the quote that has been used tonight, law-breakers should not be choosing the lawmakers. I support these changes.

At the heart of any health democracy is a simple promise: that every eligible citizen's vote matters; that elections are fair; and that political power is earned, not engineered. This bill reaffirms that promise. Our electoral system must belong to the people—not to entrenched interests, not to excessive money and not to rules that advantage a few while sidelining many. When confidence in electoral fairness erodes, trust in democracy is also weakened. This amendment bill is about restoring that trust.

The reforms before us strengthen transparency, reinforce accountability and ensure that electoral laws serve their true purpose: reflecting the will of the people. By closing loopholes, modernising outdated provisions and promoting equal participation, this bill helps level up the playing field for candidates, parties and voters alike. Importantly, it is not about favouring one political group over another. It is about fairness. It is about integrity. It is about ensuring that elections are decided by voters and not financial influence, technical manipulation or unequal access to the democratic process.

Addressing the issue of political donations will put trade unions, property developers and anyone else who wants to donate on a level playing field. The Premier made it clear prior to the election when he said that we cannot have one rule for one class and another rule for unions. This bill will right that wrong. The Premier was also right when he said that the property developer ban was fundamentally and philosophically an electoral financial gerrymander. It was set up by the former government.

The bill also amends the donation cap, with amounts to be indexed each financial year. It simplifies the electoral donation framework, making it easier to understand. My electorate is happy to see reforms in the bill in relation to the authorisation of election materials under the Electoral Act. The authorisation requirements for election materials and how-to-vote cards apply during the election period. The authorisation requirements will help voters assess the accuracy, balance and fairness of published electoral material and prevent anonymous people from disseminating insidious material. At the last election we saw a huge campaign being prosecuted by those opposite which was false and incredibly misleading.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr BENNETT:** Indeed. Voters told us they wanted more truth and transparency in political material. All will know who is behind future scare campaigns, and now they will be held accountable. More importantly, those candidates who promote it should be reported and ousted for their views. A strong democracy is one where all citizens believe their voice counts. This bill sends the clear message

that we value that voice and we protect it. We will always work to strengthen the systems that uphold it. Restoring electoral fairness is not a partisan act; it is a democratic responsibility. Future generations will judge us not by how we benefited politically but by how faithfully we protected the foundations of our democracy.

I commend the bill to the House and I urge all members to support it in the spirit of fairness, transparency and democratic renewal. I commend the AG for all of the work that has gone into this important bill. For a long period of time it was no secret that we had to fight hard against the gerrymander that was imposed upon us. More importantly, political donations should never be part of the process. I know that Queenslanders voted for a fresh start which had nothing to do with political donations.