



Speech By  
**Wendy Bourne**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST**

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Record of Proceedings, 10 February 2026

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

 **Ms BOURNE** (Ipswich West—ALP) (8.05 pm): I rise to speak on the Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025. Queenslanders expect fairness in their democracy. They expect decisions to be made in the public interest, not made under the influence of those with the greatest financial capacity to donate. While the title of this bill speaks to restoring electoral fairness, the changes proposed in this bill reduce transparency, increase private money in our elections and move Queensland away from other jurisdictions in Australia. I understand that no other state in Australia is moving to increase private money in elections; in fact, they are looking to reduce it.

That is why Labor is deeply concerned about the integrity implications of this bill and why we have our reservations, just like many key stakeholders and submitters to the parliamentary inquiry. I want to look at this bill a little more closely. Property developers play an important and legitimate role in our modern society. They build homes, create jobs and contribute to economic growth. This debate is not about demonising an industry. The issue before us is about actual and perceived conflicts of interest faced by decision-makers, particularly local governments and also the Minister for Planning.

The Crime and Corruption Commission has made it abundantly clear that political donations from property developers create corruption risks. Those corruption risks are not theoretical. They are real and they were evidenced, particularly at the local government level. They are risks that Queenslanders are all too familiar with. It is not enough to say that donations are capped or disclosed. It is understood that the CCC has consistently warned that disclosure alone does not neutralise corruption risk, particularly where donors have direct commercial interests in planning and development decisions.

Many have said that this bill creates a back door. That is precisely the risk profile this bill reintroduces. The government will argue that unions are permitted to donate while property developers were previously prohibited. That comparison does not withstand scrutiny. Unions are membership-based organisations; they are not for profit. They exist to represent the collective interests of their members—working people; that is, they exist not to advance the commercial interests of any one individual. Property developers, in contrast, are commercial entities whose profitability is directly affected by government decisions such as zoning approvals, infrastructure and development applications.

This distinction is critical when assessing corruption risk. Treating these entities as equivalent ignores the very reasons donation bans were introduced in the first place. That is probably why the Crisafulli government worked hard to silence the CCC from providing feedback on this bill either before the bill was introduced or after, because this bill moves against both the spirit and intent of the CCC's previous recommendations. The Queensland Labor opposition called for the CCC to appear. We did so because this bill deals directly with issues the CCC has investigated, reported on and made recommendations about. The absence of the CCC from the inquiry is a central reason for our statement of reservation. Queenslanders do not want a political system where influence is proportional to wealth. They want a system where trust, transparency and integrity come first.

Queensland Labor is closely monitoring reforms in other jurisdictions, including South Australia, where efforts are underway to remove the majority of private money from elections altogether. That is the direction of reform and not the direction this bill takes. Labor members of the committee have issued a statement of reservation because this bill fundamentally alters the balance of Queensland's electoral system by increasing the role of private money. Under existing arrangements, donation caps apply across a parliamentary term. This bill resets those caps annually. This, therefore, quadruples the amount of money that can be injected into Queensland elections by private donors. This is not a technical change; that is a structural change that creates larger war chests and increases reliance on private funds.

Restoring fairness does not mean restoring the practices of the past. It does not mean increasing private money in elections or sidelining legitimate concerns held by the CCC. For these reasons, the Queensland Labor opposition has issued a statement of reservation and continues to hold concerns with this bill. If the Crisafulli government is serious about electoral fairness, it must engage with the evidence, respect the role of the CCC and put the integrity of Queensland's democracy ahead of its coffers.