



Speech By  
**Corrine McMillan**

**MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD**

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

### **Second Reading**

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (5.40 pm): I rise to speak to the Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025. The Queensland Labor opposition has a strong record of upholding integrity and increasing transparency and accountability in the Queensland electoral system. We know that Queenslanders expect their representatives to be transparent in their spending, the donations they receive and what they do during elections. This bill reduces the transparency in an election by quadrupling the amount of money and increasing the amount of private money. More private money in the political system will lead to greater risk.

During the committee process several submitters, including the Crime and Corruption Commission, raised concerns about these risks. In their submission, the commission said—

The CCC considers that aspects of the changes proposed in the Bill are a significant departure from Queensland's robust political donations framework and are out-of-step with reforms introduced to manage risks associated with political influence, and perceptions of it.

It is my understanding that there is no other state in this country that is winding back their electoral donation laws. We know that this LNP government is trying to create its own war chest in an attempt to tip the scales at the next election. This LNP government may even change the expenditure caps if it so suits them, and we await what they will do next. Meanwhile, our South Australian Labor counterparts are doing everything they can to remove as many private donations from the system as they can. The Queensland Labor opposition will be watching their progress with great interest because an electoral system with less money enhances democracy.

Those opposite will point out that under the current law, unions would be able to make donations but property developers cannot. I think it should be made clear that unions are membership organisations which are not set up to benefit any one individual. Unions are not-for-profit organisations, which is where they differ from property developers. While I am on my feet, I would like to acknowledge all of the union members across Queensland for their work, ensuring strong and safe working conditions for Queenslanders. This sentiment was echoed in the Australia Institute's submission on this bill where they said—

... in the case of a trade union, if there are benefits to their members for industrial relations reform, those benefits accrue to workers in that sector, let's say, and not directly to the trade unions, so the financial incentives are very different.

I acknowledge that property developers have an important role to play in our community, particularly at the moment with a shortage of housing, and that certainly is not up for debate. The issue in this instance is that the decision-makers, such as local government and the Minister for Planning, the member for Kawana, may run into actual or perceived conflicts of interest. That presents a great risk of corruption within our system. It creates a back door at the local government level to allow property

developers to make donations for administrative purposes. This back door would then free up money to be used for electoral purposes, something which goes against the views of the Crime and Corruption Commission. In their submission, they stated—

The risks associated with political donations have been well-documented, as too are community perceptions of corruption by elected officials. The CCC's 2025 Corruption Perceptions Survey highlighted the importance of ensuring government decision-making is, and is seen to be, fair, impartial and free from influence. Concerns about bribery or receiving gifts and benefits that may influence public sector decisions was considered one of the highest risk areas by community members surveyed.

That brings me to a rather concerning point. Our state's peak integrity body did not appear before the committee despite the Labor opposition's call for them to do so. What is this government thinking in not inviting the CCC to appear before the committee? This bill is a significant change to the way we handle donations, which will change the way elections are run. The Crime and Corruption Commission should have been at the front and centre of these consultations.

As I mentioned previously, the commission expressed its concerns about this bill being a significant departure from Queensland's strong political donations framework, a framework that was reformed by the Miles-Palaszczuk Labor government. When in government, we reduced the threshold for donation disclosure to \$1,000, implemented real-time disclosure laws for donations and implemented the Crime and Corruption Commission's recommendations to prohibit property developers from making political donations. That is how you put Queensland's peak integrity body at the centre of integrity reforms but, then again, this is not the first time the LNP have made decisions that have brought integrity into question when it comes to their political donations. Further, there is a pattern of behaviour emerging whereby the LNP does not listen to stakeholders or the experts in the field.

I am advised that well before my time and that of many in this chamber there was the Karreman Quarries affair, which saw the quarries donate \$50,000 to the Liberal National Party. Then, on public record, the then LNP deputy premier, Jeff Seeney, introduced retrospective legislative amendments, which passed and effectively legalised Karreman Quarries' gravel extraction activities. This legislation declared those activities as having been legal, despite the department having found significant evidence to prosecute the company for operating without a permit. The then deputy premier denied giving special treatment, but it brings the situation into question. That was not the last time, either. There was the legislation that was introduced by the former Newman LNP government which, in the view of many people, positively impacted mining company Sibelco's interests. Many Queenslanders found it interesting that this occurred after the company spent \$91,000 sending personalised letters to the constituents of Ashgrove endorsing Campbell Newman, the one-term Premier, after his disdain for the Public Service and the people of Queensland—the greatest example of failed leadership in the Southern Hemisphere.

I must recall the time when I was principal at Cavendish Road State High School. We were awarded a hall as a school community. We had documentation from the department. One day I arrived at work and the Cavendish Road State High School hall was directed immediately to a school in Ashgrove, and here we are again with the LNP seeking to line their pockets and create an election war chest with promises of helping a particular sector. I would say: same promises, different government but, then again, their front bench has barely changed since the Newman years. I do not think we can truly call it a different government.

The Queensland Labor opposition knows the LNP cannot be trusted to be strong on integrity either at the state level or at the federal level. After all, their last prime minister secretly made himself the secondary minister for multiple portfolios. We will be watching this Crisafulli government closely—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): Member for Mansfield, I have given you a great deal of latitude, but I think you are extraordinarily far from the long title and the provisions of the bill. I ask you please to confine your contribution to the long title.

**Ms McMILLAN:** We will be watching this Crisafulli government closely and we will hold them to account. Queenslanders deserve a government that will remain transparent about their donations, their expenditure and their decision-making processes.