



Speech By  
**Joan Pease**


**MEMBER FOR LYTTON**

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

### **Second Reading**

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (5.22 pm): I rise to speak on the Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025. I would like to comment on the member for Traeger's statement earlier today when he spoke about his engagement with the electoral cycle since he was seven years old. I grew up in a politically active family that has been campaigning since I was being pushed around in a pram. I lived through the era of Joh Bjelke-Petersen. I do not know about anyone else, but I am incredibly offended to hear the word 'gerrymander' being thrown around and particularly aimed at the Labor Party, given that the LNP are the masters of gerrymandering.

**Government members** interjected.

**Ms PEASE:** Obviously I have touched a bit of a raw nerve because they are very much aware of their behaviour and how their party operates.

This bill in no way restores electoral fairness: it weakens it shamefully. The Queensland Labor Party has been the party of integrity reform in this state. Over successive terms of government we have proudly strengthened transparency and accountability in Queensland's democratic institutions. Let me remind those opposite that we reduced the donation disclosure threshold to \$1,000. Do I need to remind you all that the LNP were so unhappy with that decision that they took the Queensland Electoral Commission to the Supreme Court—that is the LNP, you lot over there—because they did not want to disclose who their donors were. You have the audacity to call me out on integrity when that is what you do? Have I reminded you all clearly enough now?

**Dr ROWAN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Whiting): Member, I remind you to address your comments through the chair.

**Dr ROWAN:** That was my point of order.

**Ms PEASE:** May I remind those opposite of their history in that space. I do not think they have a leg to stand on. The LNP did not introduce real-time disclosures; that is what the Labor Party did. We implemented the recommendations of the Crime and Corruption Commission following Operation Belcarra, including banning political donations from property developers. Queensland has, in the words of the CCC, a strong political donations framework as a result of those reforms.

**Government members** interjected.

**Ms PEASE:** They obviously do not like what I am talking about. Here we are with a bill dressed up in the language of restoring fairness when in reality all it does is increase private money in our electoral system. No other state in Australia is winding back electoral donation laws. As was highlighted during the inquiry process, even the Australia Institute noted that they were not aware of any jurisdiction lifting restrictions where they exist. In fact, South Australia is moving in the opposite direction and removing most private donations from politics altogether. The bill put forward by the LNP moves Queenslanders backwards.

Let me be very clear. I have some very good friends who are property developers. Property developers have a legitimate role in our modern society. They build homes; they have great hearts. I have a great property developer, Nick Cave, who is building fabulous social housing because he has a heart, as do many of my local property developers. They build homes, they contribute to supply and they are an important part of addressing our current housing challenges. This debate is not about demonising an industry. It is about the risk—real or perceived—that decision-makers may be placed in positions of conflicts.

In its submission the Crime and Corruption Commission warned that aspects of this bill are a significant departure from Queensland's robust political donations framework and are out of step with reforms designed to manage risks with political influence. The CCC further warned that increased risks of actual or perceived corruption may arise in the lead-up to the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games, which will be a period of massive infrastructure and development activity.

Who holds enormous planning power in this state? The Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. Since the Belcarra reforms, and particularly in recent months, state planning powers have expanded: ministerial infrastructure designations, state facilitated developments and Olympic infrastructure oversight. When you combine expanded planning power with the reintroduction of developer donations you increase the risk of corruption at the decision-making level. That is a huge concern.

The CCC did not appear at the public hearing despite the opposition calling for them to attend. The committee did not hear from Queensland's peak integrity body, and that should concern every member of this House and indeed every Queenslander. Quite frankly, I do not think that would pass the pub test.

Even more concerning is the creation of what can only be described as a backdoor at the local government level. Under this bill, property developers will be able to make 'restricted donations' for administrative purposes—not directly for elections. However, as the CCC pointed out, separating those funds does not remove the prospect that other commensurate funds could be allocated to candidates, creating at least the perception of influence. Put simply, you free up money on one side and it can flow to the other. This is precisely the type of risk that Operation Belcarra was designed to address.

In my electorate and in my Brisbane City Council ward of Wynnum Manly, there is a significant undertaking going on with regards to upgrading the neighbourhood plan. There is a plan for a huge development in my area. This is a great opportunity to provide housing which would be great for families and affordable living. That is why it is really important we get this legislation right, and I do not think that is happening.

Let us turn to donation caps. As I have already said, we all know that the LNP have never liked the Labor Party donation caps—so much so that they were prepared to spend money with the Supreme Court to try to stifle it. The government says that the monetary cap itself has not changed. What they do not emphasise—or make public, as such—is that by shifting the cap period from an electoral cycle to a financial year they effectively quadruple the amount that can be donated across a four-year term. That is shameful.

We know what the government will say. They will point to the trade unions. However, what they do not say is that unions are not-for-profit organisations representing workers collectively. As was noted during the hearing, any industrial relations reform that benefits members benefits workers broadly—not a single corporate entity seeking a planning decision. The financial incentives are so different. This bill is not about parity; it is about power.

Queenslanders know what happens when electoral laws are manipulated. I have talked about the gerrymandering of the past. We remember the era when electoral boundaries were distorted to entrench power and maintain that power. We remember the corruption scandals that followed. Even in more recent history, we have seen examples of controversial retrospective amendments benefiting donors, rezonings raising eyebrows and decisions that left Queenslanders questioning whether influence was at play.

Integrity frameworks exist for a reason. They exist because public confidence is fragile. That is the message that we as elected representatives should always remember. Being in this place is fragile so you must stand up to represent your electorates and make it very clear on which side of the conversation you want to be. That is why I am really proud to be able to stand here and note what we as the Labor Party have done in this space.