



Speech By
Joan Pease

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (EMPOWERING COUNCILS) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (7.39 pm): My goodness me, what an amazingly shambolic day this has been. I have to say that as an elected representative in this House—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lister): We will have some order thank you, members to my right.

Ms PEASE: Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. I was elected in 2015 to represent the people of the bayside. It was a really proud moment. My constituents watch parliament regularly to see what is going on, so honourable members can imagine how disappointed and ashamed they are to hear, watch and witness the behaviour of the LNP in this chamber not just today but ongoing. I am ashamed. I am ashamed to come in here and have to stand up and talk—

Mr STEVENS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Can we have relevance to the bill at hand, please?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am inclined to give the member a little bit of leniency here. I trust you will be coming to the substance of the bill. I give you the call, member for Lytton.

Ms PEASE: Thank you very much for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. I know that the member for Mermaid Beach or Mermaid Waters—wherever he is from—always loves to get up and give me a hard time, so bring it on I say. It would be disappointing if he did not.

Mr Whiting: Especially after dinner.

Ms PEASE: That is right. I was about to start on the bill, particularly about today. Here I am; I am on a committee. I am on the committee that you chair, Mr Deputy Speaker. Amendments were introduced into the House with no time for our committee to scrutinise them, with no time for the LGAQ to scrutinise them, with no time for the councils across Queensland to scrutinise them, and now we are required to vote on them.

Mr Head: Was it 17 minutes?

Mr Stevens: Eighteen minutes.

Mr Head: Eighteen minutes. What was that for again? It changed our voting system, didn't it?

Ms PEASE: I am actually quite happy to take all of those ridiculous interjections from over there because it is not just this one bill. I think it is every bill that has been introduced into this chamber since that mob over there was elected that has been made an urgent bill. 'This one is urgent. This one is urgent,' and then at the last minute we are flung amendments. What an embarrassment to their lot. If I were those backbenchers I would be saying, 'What the hell is our leadership doing?'

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Lytton, if you wish to enliven interjections, gesticulating like that is one way to ensure they happen. I can only provide you so much protection.

Ms PEASE: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am more than happy to take the interjections because it might give the backbenchers the opportunity to voice their concerns and their disappointment with their leadership team, which is probably what they are doing because they are going to get guillotined.

Ms CAMM: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. It is on relevance to the long title of the bill. Could we draw the member's attention to that?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Lytton, you have had a good go. I can see you are illustrating something to come back to the bill. I encourage you to do that.

Ms PEASE: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. Yes, I am talking to the long title of the bill because I am talking about the very limited amount of time we were given to look at the amendments. I am sorry, but does that not fit into the long title of the bill? Is that another thing that this LNP government has changed—what actually fits under the long title of the bill? Perhaps it has; I do not know. It could have happened—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think you are straying into commentary on decisions of the chair or potential decisions of the chair. I ask you to move on and speak to the bill.

Ms PEASE: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will because I want to make our local councils across Queensland aware of what these amendments actually mean. These amendments to the bill mean that council documentation will not be available to be accessed for 10 years. My council—I am part of Brisbane City Council—has a budget of millions of dollars. In actual fact, the Brisbane City Council budget was \$4.1 billion last financial year. I am sure that the councillors, particularly my own councillor, Councillor Givney for the Wynnum Manly ward, would like to have access to documentation and to find out about the proposed neighbourhood plan changes and what it means for the constituents in their wards. Now under this bill and these amendments that were just handed down tonight, unless the individual councillor is part of that civic cabinet they will not be allowed to find that out. It will now be inaccessible for 10 years.

What are we trying to hide here? What is actually the purpose of these amendments? It beggars belief, quite frankly. These amendments dramatically, as I have said, restrict councillors' access to key decision-making documents within the Brisbane City Council committees. What are we trying to hide that we do not want our councillors to see, regardless of their political colour? Why are non-committee members, including the Brisbane Labor councillors, being locked out of important documents, even where the decisions affect the entire city? I cannot comprehend why. What is the purpose of that?

These amendments and their secrecy go in the opposite direction of the transparency reform that was the start of the Coaldrake review. That review called for greater transparency, stronger accountability and improved access to rebuild public trust. How is doing this building public trust? To me it is portraying the government as trying to hide things that are going on within the councils. I am sorry, but I am very confused. I guess I am confused because as a committee and as the opposition we did not actually have a chance to scrutinise those amendments. We did not have the opportunity to get behind them and talk about that. The other thing is that I have here a speaking list that is two pages.

Mr Kempton: Good for you.

Ms PEASE: I will take that interjection because do you know what? You are going to be guillotined. You are not going to get to talk about it. That is what this is about.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Lytton, please direct your comments through the chair.

Ms PEASE: I took the interjection, thank you very much. All of these government members at the bottom of the list are probably going to miss out on talking about this 'very important piece of legislation'.

Mr Ryan: Table it.

Ms PEASE: I am going to table this speaking list. I would like to table it because they are all going to miss out, as are the opposition members and crossbenchers.

Tabled paper: Document, undated, speaking list titled 'Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill' [289](#).

This is all down to the fact that this is 'really important legislation' that 'has to go through tonight'. There is all of this secrecy, hypocrisy and lack of transparency. 'It is so urgent.' If it is so important—

A government member interjected.

Ms PEASE: I do not know what I am talking about because I was not given any time to review the documents. That is why. I have had no opportunity.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: One of the things Mr Speaker emphasised during the week at the meeting of the Deputy Speakers is that we are to stomp on cross-chamber quarrelling. I can see his point because it lets things get out of hand. Could we all just take a chill pill? I encourage members not to engage in cross-chamber chatter or respond to interjections that are provocative. I will handle the House.

Ms PEASE: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I would like to take the interjection from the member for Warrego indicating that I do not know what I am talking about and reinforce that the reason I do not know what is going on in the bill is that I was not given the opportunity to review the amendments. That is why. Like all of us, I have been going through them because at the last moment I was given the opportunity to speak to this bill and obviously I am upsetting those opposite. What is really frightening is that we should be more upset and they should be more worried about what the community is going to think of them. What will the community and what will the councillors say about this bill being rushed through like this? What will local councillors—

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr HEAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence at the interjection from the member for Pine Rivers directed at me and I ask her to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I did not hear it. Is it common ground here that you made an interjection, member for Pine Rivers? Would you withdraw?

Ms BOYD: I withdraw.

Ms PEASE: This bill departs from key recommendations of the CCC Operation Belcarra, and those reforms strengthened the integrity laws to manage conflicts of interest and reduce corruption risks. I, like most Queenslanders, abhor corruption. That is why it is really important that we ensure that councils are strong and full of integrity and give them every opportunity that we can to ensure that they have easy, clear guidelines to follow and that they are transparent and cannot be led down the path of corruption.

A government member: Ugh!

Ms PEASE: Excuse me, but I am going to continue and ignore the member for Nicklin because, as usual, he very rarely has anything important to say.

Government members interjected.

Ms PEASE: The bill changes the conflict-of-interest and register-of-interests settings—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, the House is quite disorderly. This is not a circus. If you have something to say, take it outside please.

Ms PEASE: The bill mandates councillor involvement in senior executive appointment processes. Some councils already do this but others do not—for good reasons, including conflicts of interest in small communities, a lack of expertise in complex recruitment, time burdens and the desire to preserve an objective, merit-based separation between elected members and administration. Queensland councils are diverse. A uniform governance model does not fit every council nor every size, every capacity and context. During our inquiry stakeholders raised concerns about removing the conduct breaches that create a gap between minor matters and serious misconduct or corrupt conduct, leaving serious behavioural issues without a clear enforcement pathway.

I want to finish how I started and reinforce the opposition's disappointment in the lack of time that we were given to participate in consideration of the amendments—something that impacts each and every Queensland and each and every council. Again, I apologise to my constituents for the unruly behaviour.