




Speech By
Martin Hunt

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

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ELECTORAL LAWS (RESTORING ELECTORIAL FAIRNESS) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Mr HUNT** (Nicklin—LNP) (3.26 pm): I was a member of the opposition in February 2020 when the then Labor government came into the parliament to pass their financial gerrymander laws, which were deliberately designed to frustrate political donations whilst they pocketed the millions of dollars in union cash they knew were available to them. As chair of the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee, I am proud to stand here today to reverse those laws with the Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill 2025. I thank my fellow committee members and the secretariat for their great work and the many submitters to the bill.

Under Labor's laws introduced before the 2020 election, the definition of 'prohibited donor' not only unfairly singled out an important industry in Queensland but also was so deliberately vague in its more than 700 words it caught mum-and-dad investors and many other ordinary people trying to save for their futures, effectively marking them all as untrustworthy and uniquely susceptible to corrupt behaviour. The deliberate vagueness of the previous definition saw the Electoral Commission able to rule on applications and find that someone was not a prohibited donor under the definition, but they could not provide a ruling to declare a person was a prohibited donor. This caused immense confusion, and that is exactly what the Labor Party wanted.

It was an outrageous singling out of an industry, an industry we know that those opposite hate—and it showed. This unfair demonisation of an industry in the middle of a Labor-caused housing crisis was a move that put projects in jeopardy. As noted in evidence to the committee by Jess Caire, an executive director of the Property Council of Australia—

The vital role the property sector plays cannot be overstated. Queensland relies on our industry to deliver the homes and the precincts that our growing state needs, yet at the same time singling out the sector and allowing its vilification has reinforced the damaging and unfair narrative. That singling out has had consequences well beyond the original regulatory intent. This discriminatory regulation has not only undermined the confidence of the industry but also contributed to the demonisation of the industry, shaping community perceptions in ways that it makes it harder to have constructive conversations about growth, housing delivery and planning. These narratives do not just damage reputations; they fuel NIMBY sentiment and make it more difficult to deliver the diverse housing and infrastructure that Queensland so urgently needs.

Labor would be scratching their collective heads wondering why there was a housing crisis under them, why Queensland became the lowest home ownership state and why supply stalled as Queenslanders were encouraged to see any property developer—

Mr McCALLUM: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. I ask the member to be relevant to the long title of the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): I am actually looking through the report and the greens on this bill. Member, you are just within those boundaries at the moment. I ask you to please remain relevant; otherwise we will have to pull you up. You can resume.

Mr HUNT: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am referring directly to quotes from the Property Council and the impact that those laws we are changing had on the property sector, so it is relevant, Mr Deputy Speaker. They unfairly led to mistrust in the very industry that invests and supplies housing for people, as the Property Council said in evidence to the committee. Anyone can make an argument that political donations of any kind hold a risk of corruption, whether it is from mining companies, contracting companies, licensed venues, tourism operators—

Mr Stevens: Unions!

Mr HUNT:—or, dare I say, trade unions, or family and small businesses—all of which rely on government decision-making that impacts them. Thankfully, official corruption findings are very rare amongst members of parliament, with the last two members jailed in relation to dealings with major retailers, training organisations and mining related activities, not property developers. The case simply cannot be made for singling out one group for exclusion above all others, and that case was never made at a state level. That is why the Premier took to the last election a commitment to restore fairness and now has a mandate to do just that with this important bill.

I want to thank the people of Queensland who supported the LNP's election to government and the important restoration of electoral fairness that this bill forms part of. People donate to political parties because of their values and policies, not necessarily to influence them, and that is the important consideration. All of us in this House are rightly subjected to high levels of scrutiny, and our donations are disclosed. This will continue but in a fair and equitable manner by removing Labor's financial gerrymander.

I note in Labor's statement of reservation they quote the Australia Institute several times. I will just point out for the benefit of the House that the submitter from the Australia Institute admitted to the committee that he had been a fundraising coordinator for the Greens party and he had been a member of that same party. He provided plenty of opinion in his submission, but for an alleged research organisation no empirical data was provided to support any of the opinions provided. With that in mind, members can decide what weight they give that evidence.

On the part of the bill that relates to prisoner voting, most of the submissions received were related to a campaign objecting to this. I want to draw attention particularly to those who would assert that 12 months imprisonment can unfairly target people with minor offences, particularly summary offences. This is not backed up by facts. You need to have a significant level of offending to spend 12 months or more in prison.

A search of the sentencing advisory board statistics on their website reveals actual sentences for breaches of the Summary Offences Act that submitters referred to. The fact is that for the last five years up to July 2025, 12,176 people were sentenced in court for a Summary Offences Act breach for the offences listed in submissions, and of those people only six received a sentence of 12 months or more. That is less than 0.05 per cent. Of those six offenders sentenced for 12 months or more, four of them were for unlawful possession of suspected stolen property—an offence for which people are charged when in possession of stolen property where an owner cannot be located. One could safely assume in these extreme cases that this would have involved a significant amount of property or was coupled with other offences to receive a lengthy prison sentence. The other two instances resulting in a sentence of 12 months or more related to trespass in a dwelling house—so entering someone's home. I do not know of the individual cases but to get a 12-month sentence, in my experience, it is likely that it involved other charges as well.

This alleged sentencing of 12 months imprisonment for minor summary offences just does not occur. These assertions that minor offenders will be excluded from voting are plainly false based on these figures. Every ex-police officer in this House knows from experience the level of offending or repeat offending that sees you get a sentence of 12 months or more. It is invariably significant and a serious breach of the law. I support the bill, which restricts their right to vote whilst they are serving those sentences.

There were also suggestions from some submitters that the amendments in this bill were not compatible with the High Court ruling in *Roach v Electoral Commissioner*. To be clear, that action was related to a blanket ban on all prisoners voting which was found to be invalid, but it is important to note the Chief Justice's actual ruling and I will conclude by quoting it. I note the member for Gaven left this very important bit out. Chief Justice Gleeson in his ruling stated in part—

It is also for Parliament ... to decide the basis upon which to identify incarcerated offenders whose serious criminal wrongdoing warrants temporary suspension of a right of citizenship. I have no doubt that the disenfranchisement of prisoners serving three-year sentences was valid—

and this is the important bit—

and I do not suggest that disenfranchisement of prisoners serving sentences of some specified lesser term would necessarily be invalid.

I commend the bill to the House.