



Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

Record of Proceedings, 10 February 2026

ELECTORAL LAWS (RESTORING ELECTORIAL FAIRNESS) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 44, on motion of Mrs Frecklington—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (3.06 pm), continuing: While it might be the case that the then opposition leader and now Premier said that he would lift the ban on developer donations, we are not aware of any commitment to increase the donation limit and change the periods before the election. We are also not aware of any commitment that will see a quadrupling of the donation limit someone can make to a particular political party in any term of parliament. We are also not aware of any commitment that would make the laws we are debating today retrospective to the beginning of the financial year. Maybe if the Crisafulli LNP government released the election commitment tracker, which was transparently released by the former Labor government at regular intervals, then we might be able to see what commitments were made. Unfortunately, we see cover-ups from those opposite.

The crux of the issue here is that the Crisafulli LNP government are effectively increasing the risk of corruption in politics in Queensland. By increasing the amount of private money that can flow into politics you are increasing the perceived and actual risk of corruption. We on this side of the House are not aware of any other jurisdiction in the country that is regressing on its electoral laws. It has been a few minutes since I quoted the Crime and Corruption Commission so here we go again. They stated in their submission—

The Bill changes are coupled with an increase in real terms on the cap for political donations. With the change to the political donations cap period from an electoral term to a financial year, this effectively quadruples the sum that property developers, along with all other political donors, may donate in an election cycle.

Instead of actually ensuring that the electoral system in Queensland is fair, those opposite clearly want to open the floodgates and let private money flow in. What I found particularly interesting were some of the comments by some of the submitters, and particularly Mr Geoffrey Watson SC, the Director of the Centre for Public Integrity, who, I am advised, said in relation to these laws on 9News in January of this year—

I'm very disappointed because this is quite a retrograde step, not only does it reintroduce the possible corrupting influence of property developers, but it also greatly enhances the amount which they can donate to a campaign, thus increasing their power of influence.

Mr Watson went on to say—

And if people are using money, deep pockets, to distort that process, everyone should be concerned about that.

Regardless of the source of money, the quadrupling of the donation limit will have a potential distortion on the electoral system whereby people with deep pockets may be able to influence decisions.

Members might recognise the name Geoffrey Watson because he is in fact the same Geoffrey Watson the Deputy Premier associates himself with in respect of his work on addressing matters related to the CFMEU. It is interesting that the LNP government on the one hand want to respect the views of Mr Watson, but on the other hand dismiss them when it does not suit the political narrative they are trying to push.

The increase of private funds in our political system is a retrograde, backward step, and many stakeholders in the committee process and even those experts in the field, such as people like Geoffrey Watson, agree. In fact, these laws could mean that individuals associated with gun lobby groups could increase their political donation to parties like the LNP.

I am advised that since 2012 the LNP have received approximately \$280,000 of donations from firearms dealers or members of the firearms industry. Under these proposed laws, these groups could now donate four times more. Submission 43 to the inquiry stated—

I don't believe there should be any political donations accepted by any political party from Gun Lobbies or Gun manufacturers/companies.

For political parties to accept these donations, it can sway their decisions about the availability and use of guns, which can impact on the safety of the public.

Of course, we continue to wait to see the full implementation of the Wieambilla coroners report recommendations by the Crisafulli LNP government, and we join many stakeholders, including the family members of Matthew Arnold and Rachel McCrow—

Mr HUNT: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance under standing order 118(b). The member is straying into other areas to do with firearm laws.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): I will seek some advice on that point of order.

Ms SCANLON: It is not relevant to those laws.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Gaven, I do not need your assistance.

Ms SCANLON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is your point of order on that point of order?

Ms SCANLON: It is. Those laws do not at all respond to the Wieambilla recommendations.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Gaven. Member for Nicklin, thank you for your point of order. I was seeking some advice around that. Member for Gaven, I will caution you not to stray outside of the contents of the bill. I have been listening. I will give you the call and urge you to continue relevantly in relation to the bill.

Ms SCANLON: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I am talking about donations from the gun lobby. This is a bill that would allow the gun lobby to quadruple the amount they can donate to a political party. I am talking about a submission that came to the committee, of which the member is the chair, and I am simply putting the point that it is interesting that the gun lobby can now quadruple how much money they can provide, yet seemingly the government is not responding to the Wieambilla recommendations. That is not pre-empting the debate of the bill before the House because those laws do not respond to the Wieambilla recommendations, which is why we are so disappointed. That is the point.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Gaven, I will again give you some guidance in terms of anticipating debate on a bill that is now before the House. Perhaps you could move on to another point.

Ms SCANLON: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I will move on. The risk of this bill is to increase private money in Queensland politics. I think that is incredibly concerning. That is why the Labor opposition is carefully watching the implementation in jurisdictions like South Australia, which has put a ban on private donations in its political system. The actions of the Labor government in South Australia will remove all of those private donations except for a small subset. That will level the playing field and make the electoral system fairer—that is the intent of those laws, in fact—and its aim is ultimately about de-risking and reducing the perceived or actual conflict-of-interest and corruption risks. It is a shame that this Crisafulli LNP government did not have the gumption and the ticker to continue Labor's integrity reforms in this place and implement maybe something similar to South Australia, but I am not particularly surprised, given their track record.

Speaking of their track record, with all of that in mind—the quadrupling of private donations able to come in and the widening of the scope of the donor pool—it is always important to look at the history and actions of the LNP when in government through the prism of this legislation, because I am advised that it was former deputy premier and now CS Energy deputy chairperson Jeff Seeney who moved amendments in this very chamber to retrospectively amend legislation to legalise certain actions of Karreman Quarries. Guess how much they donated to the LNP? \$50,000. I am further advised that Jeff

Seeney, when deputy premier, also used ministerial powers to rezone the privately owned Maroochy River Caravan Park, owned by a donor to the LNP, which reportedly resulted in the property value going up. It must be a thing with LNP deputy premiers who have the planning portfolio.

Ms Enoch interjected.

Ms SCANLON: I take the interjection about Sibelco. There are two examples that come to mind, and I am sure there are many more, where the potential for influence or the perception of influence from donations is clearly there.

In the time remaining, I wish to talk about the process of getting to where we are today. Members who have been listening would have noticed that I quoted the Crime and Corruption Commission a lot, and that is because that institution is important to Queensland. The Queensland Labor opposition values the work of the CCC, and we thought the LNP might, too. However, what we unearthed during the committee process is alarming. The Crime and Corruption Commission were not consulted by this government on the preparation of this bill, the very bill which unwinds many of the integrity measures which the CCC have been, in fact, advocating for. When the Department of Justice were asked, they said—

As public servants, we take instructions from the minister of the day. Again, I think any questions in relation to consultation should be referred to the Attorney-General.

My question to the Attorney-General is: why were the CCC not consulted by the Attorney-General or by the LNP government on the preparation of this bill? Was it because she would have received a nasty shock that they did not support these laws? Or did the LNP know and purposely not consult them? I suspect it is the latter—hardly the actions of the government that advocated for the sun to shine in.

While we respect the Electoral Commission of Queensland and the work they do, it was also surprising to learn that they had already started preparing for the implementation of these new laws, even before the committee process had started, and seemingly they had not consulted with the CCC either. You would think the CCC would provide oral evidence at the committee hearing, but unfortunately they were not available on the day of the hearing. There were many submitters who remarked on the fact that this bill was introduced right on the eve of Christmas and it was difficult for a number of organisations to appear before the committee. I want to be clear: neither I nor the opposition are reflecting on the CCC for not being able to appear before the committee, but I do want to table a *Courier-Mail* article by Hayden Johnson which was published the day after the hearing. It says—

Government MPs have blocked a push for the Crime and Corruption Commission to give evidence about its warning that reinstating political donations from property developers would increase corruption risk.

I table the article.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 17 January 2026, titled 'Corruption watchdog silenced over fears developer donations risk tainting 2032 Olympics' [143](#).

The Attorney-General, during her introductory speech, stated that 'it begins to level the playing field in Queensland elections', the operative word in this sentence being 'begins'. What is it that the Attorney and the Crisafulli LNP government have up their sleeve to do next to our electoral system in Queensland if they are just beginning? We have seen a lot of commentary about other electoral reforms. Will the LNP increase the expenditure caps or remove them completely? The bill quadruples the amount of funds that can be donated by an individual, so it would seem likely that expenditure caps might increase as well. We call on the Attorney-General to come clean to the people of Queensland and advise if there will be any changes—

Mr HUNT: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. The member is speculating about other legislation that might be brought before the House. It is not relevant to the current bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I hear your point of order.

Ms MULLEN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I note that in the statement of reservation this is actually referenced as part of the debate, so I ask that you consider that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Jordan. I will seek some advice. Member for Gaven, you are referring to something that is in the statement of reservation?

Ms SCANLON: Yes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your point of order, member for Nicklin. The member for Gaven can continue, being relevant to the bill.

Ms SCANLON: We call on the Attorney-General to come clean to the people of Queensland and advise if there will be any changes not already prescribed in law to expenditure caps for elections in Queensland. Will the LNP increase the number of seats in this chamber? Will the LNP bring back their idea of requiring identification to vote, which impacted a number of marginalised members of the community?

Mr HUNT: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance under standing order 118(b), again. Just because they put irrelevant material in their statement of reservation does not make it relevant to the bill, I would submit.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your point of order, member for Nicklin. I will seek some advice on that point. I will ask the member for Gaven to assure the House again that this matter is referred to in the statement of reservation. If it is, she may continue.

Ms SCANLON: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can you give that assurance to the House, that the matters you are referring to are referred to in the statement of reservation?

Ms SCANLON: A number of these matters were referred to in the statement of reservation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The ones that you are referring to?

Ms SCANLON: Yes, Deputy Speaker, I believe they are, but I will move on.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members to my right.

Ms SCANLON: I am happy to keep going. We already know that the LNP are trying to rig the Redistribution Commission outcome by putting people like John Sosso on the commission, so anything at this point is possible.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I urge you to remain relevant to the bill, member for Gaven.

Ms SCANLON: The bill before us deals with a number of matters, including changes to the preselection ballots of political parties to enhance their independence, amendments to allow loans from financial institutions to be used for electoral expenditure, increasing the period that materials have to be authorised for and the use of post-office boxes.

In respect of authorising material for elections, the increase to the period that materials need to be authorised within to 12 months seems on the face of it sensible and reasonable, particularly in a modern age where campaigns start earlier. In 2028 Queenslanders will go to the ballot box three times for local, state and federal government elections, so it is important that people know who is issuing materials and for what.

However, allowing post-office boxes to be used rather than physical addresses to authorise materials may seem sound in respect of protecting an individual's privacy, but it also limits Queenslanders' ability to find out who is actually authorising and putting out materials. Under the proposed new system, someone could put out materials and remain anonymous, as the use of a post-office box does not readily allow individuals—

Government members interjected.

Ms SCANLON: I hear the interjections from those opposite. These are their own changes, so I do not know what their problem is. It is bizarre.

There have been many examples in the past of the media undertaking their important work and finding out that some cooker or rogue agent has authorised materials because they had to use a physical address. While it is noted that materials under \$6,000 do not need to be registered with the ECQ, there is a risk here to our democracy, which should be considered.

In respect of financial institution loans being able to be used for electoral expenditure, we on this side of the House assume that this change is to enable the LNP to get a loan from a bank to fund their campaigns rather than, as has been the case, from candidates and former MPs. Again, we are not going to die in a ditch over some of these measures.

This bill changes the eligibility criteria for prisoner voting. Currently, a person sentenced to imprisonment for three years or less can vote, but that will change to 12 months or less, meaning anyone sentenced to a period of imprisonment of more than 12 months cannot vote. While the failed leader, now Attorney, outlined when this change to three years was implemented in her introductory speech, what she failed to do, unsurprisingly, was outline why this change has been made. As was clearly outlined in the explanatory notes in 2019, which I am sure the Attorney can get a copy of and read, the amendment at the time was 'aligning Queensland's position on prisoner voting with the Commonwealth position post the High Court decision in *Roach v Electoral Commission*'. As was outlined in the Queensland Law Society's submission, which I am sure as a solicitor and the current first law officer of Queensland, the Attorney may have read—

The High Court's decision ... provides critical guidance on establishing a non-arbitrary threshold for prisoner disenfranchisement, grounding such restrictions in the seriousness of offending and individual culpability. The Court determined that while a blanket ban on prisoner voting is unconstitutional, a three-year imprisonment threshold is a reasonable measure because it serves as a reliable proxy for what constitutes a serious crime.

They go on to state—

The Explanatory Notes and Statement of Compatibility do not provide any detailed consideration of evidence or empirical data to justify the proposed lowering of the disqualification threshold.

This is another example of the Attorney and the Crisafulli LNP government not backing up their position with facts and evidence. It is a bit like how they are hiding behind the Expert Legal Panel to change youth justice laws, but we will leave that for another day.

Mrs Gerber interjected.

Ms SCANLON: I would not be talking if I were the member for Currumbin. The Queensland Labor opposition will always stand up for the rights of victims in Queensland. We were the government that established the Victims' Commissioner to support all victims in Queensland. We were the government that brought in many laws to protect Queenslanders; however, we as parliamentarians cannot let laws go through this chamber without calling out the views of a wide variety of stakeholders, including the legal profession, of which the Attorney-General is supposed to be a member.

The Queensland Labor Party is the party of integrity reform in Queensland. Successive Labor administrations have increased transparency and accountability in Queensland's democratic institutions. These strong integrity reforms—and I remind those opposite of them—include: reducing the threshold for donation disclosure to \$1,000; implementing real-time disclosure laws for political donations, which is why we know about some of those on the opposite side; and implementing recommendations from the CCC to prohibit property developers from making donations.

We are proud to be part of a team that champions electoral integrity reform. Those LNP members opposite should hang their heads in shame for being associated with laws that are watering down and regressing our strong electoral laws. The question before this House is simple: does this bill strengthen confidence in Queensland's electoral system, or does it introduce new questions that did not previously exist? The CCC has expressed concern. Integrity experts have urged caution. Queenslanders expect us to listen.