



Speech By  
**Hon. Meaghan Scanlon**

**MEMBER FOR GAVEN**

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

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (12.46 pm): I rise to contribute to the bill that was introduced by the Crisafulli LNP government just before the Christmas break, the so-called Electoral Laws (Restoring Electoral Fairness) Amendment Bill. This bill is now being declared urgent and members are being gagged from contributing to this debate, just like I suspect the Premier tried to gag his members on abortion reform, which did not work very well for the member for Mackay today, though.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr McDonald): Member for Gaven, it would be very helpful if you could confine your contribution to this bill.

**Ms SCANLON:** Certainly. I heard the contribution of the member for Mermaid Beach, who said the people of Queensland want these bills dealt with urgently. I am not sure the people of Queensland think it is urgent that developers be able to donate to the Liberal National Party. Maybe the white shoe brigade that the member for Mermaid Beach hangs out with on the weekends and at the turf club think it is urgent, but I do not think ordinary Queenslanders think that this is the priority of this House. Clearly, it is the priority of the LNP.

This bill says one thing on the cover and does the complete opposite on the inside. This bill claims to restore fairness but it actually weakens integrity. It opens the door to big money and increases the risk of corruption in Queensland politics. At the precise moment this government lifts the ban on property developer donations it is also selling off public land and removing affordable housing conditions.

The state's peak corruption watchdog agrees that there are significant concerns. The Crime and Corruption Commission—the body that is responsible for preventing corruption in this state—told the committee that parts of this 'are a significant departure from Queensland's robust political donations framework', warning that changes 'are out of step with reforms introduced to manage risks associated with political influence, and perceptions of it'. Those are not my words; those are the words of the peak corruption watchdog in this state.

That warning is very real and it is serious. The ban was not introduced lightly. It was introduced deliberately after serious consideration to strengthen confidence in Queensland's electoral system.

**Mr Hunt:** It's a gerrymander.

**Ms SCANLON:** I take the interjection from the chair of the committee. The recommendations to ban developer donations were from integrity experts. You cannot say that you are pro integrity and transparency and then come in here and trash their recommendations. That is what the LNP chair of the committee effectively just did. These recommendations were supported by integrity bodies—that certain categories of donors warranted tighter regulation because of the nature of the decisions governments are required to make. That is the framework this bill now proposes to unwind. The Labor opposition recognises the role the property developers play in Queensland.

**Mr Hunt:** You hate them.

**Ms SCANLON:** I take the interjection. We do not hate them.

**Mr Hunt** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr McDonald): Order, members!

**Ms SCANLON:** We recognise the role that they play in the housing supply system. Increasing supply matters. Those opposite have been quick to criticise me and some of the decisions I made to unlock affordable housing—decisions taken in the housing minister's electorate, the assistant housing minister's electorate and even the Deputy Premier's electorate. Those decisions were not easy and they were not always popular but they were taken for one reason only: they were in the public good. They were about getting homes built where they were needed.

**Mr Stevens:** Expensive houses in Arundel. Your union mates did it.

**Ms SCANLON:** They were about affordability, member for Mermaid Beach. They were about using planning powers to deliver affordable housing for Queenslanders. They were not about who donated, not about who asked and not about whether it was politically convenient or not. That is exactly why strong, clear donation frameworks matter, because when governments act in the public interest they should never have to answer questions about whether money played a role. Good integrity laws protect decision-makers and, as such, they protect public confidence. What this bill does is the complete opposite of that.

We heard an argument during the committee process that allowing more money into politics would somehow reduce the community opposition to development. That argument I think completely misunderstands the problem. Community concern is not caused by a lack of donations; it is caused by a lack of trust. Trust is built through good planning, clear rules and proper engagement, not by changing who can donate to a political party. Developers are part of the solution to housing supply, as I have said, and strong integrity laws protect them too. The Crime and Corruption Commission 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.

They were considered one of the highest risk areas by community members surveyed! Queenslanders deserve and expect that their political leaders operate within an environment that is free from political interference or influence, and it is clear from the CCC's submissions that the changes in this bill will increase corruption risk and go against what Queenslanders want, which is to have a government that makes decisions fairly, impartially and free from influence.

I know that those opposite have made a number of comments about the Belcarra report, which I am not sure, frankly, helps their argument, but I think it is important to note what has actually happened since that report was commissioned. The fact is that the Queensland government now has taken more responsibility in the planning space. There are now more ways that the Minister for Planning can enable access and approve developments since Belcarra, including through the state facilitated development pathway and the ministerial infrastructure designation process. At the same time, we see public land being sold off and affordable housing targets and requirements stripped away under what the government calls its Land Activation Program—or LAP, as the Deputy Premier likes to call it, perhaps because he seems so comfortable putting public land and public value straight into developers' laps. The Deputy Premier now appears less like a planning minister and more like 'Bleijie White'—clearing sites, clearing conditions and moving land.

When power, though, is concentrated and safeguards are weakened, public confidence matters. It is hardly surprising that on the *Courier-Mail's* own Facebook page Queenslanders are openly making cynical comments about 'brown paper bags'. Integrity laws exist precisely to stop that kind of doubt taking hold in the first place. In fact, do not take my word for it. Let's hear from the Crime and Corruption Commission again where they stand in their submission. They said—

The CCC's observes that the increased risks of actual or perceived corruption in relation to political donations which may arise from the Bill will occur during the significant period in the lead up to the 2032 Brisbane Olympic Games. Queensland is entering a period of increased investment in property and infrastructure development driven by population growth, economic diversification, with major sporting and other events. There is concern that the reintroduction of property developer donations could exacerbate real and/or perceived risks of undue or improper influence, particularly as developer interests align closely with major projects.

There was also a submission from Mr Meyers, a retired public servant who worked in the integrity and ethical standards arena for many years in Queensland, who stated—

The planning powers of the State in Queensland are able to confer greater benefit at scale to developers in a State preparing for the Olympic Games and at a time when all governments are under pressure to address a housing crisis and free up land for urban development.

There are no prizes for guessing who is at the top of the Olympic infrastructure tree in Queensland. That is the Deputy Premier. If this law goes through, what mechanisms will the Deputy Premier put in place to ensure he is not unduly influenced in his decision-making? Will the Deputy Premier refuse to take donations from property developers? I suspect not, meaning if Queenslanders know that property developers can donate to politicians—and, in particular, to an individual at the top of the tree who makes those very planning decisions, Olympic infrastructure decisions, and also now sell off land to developers with no conditions of affordable housing—then I think there is a reasonable case that Queenslanders will think there is a perceived or actual conflict of interest that can arise. Is this the Queensland that we want, where the electoral integrity framework is watered down to a point that enables corruption to occur by decision-makers? While that is a rhetorical question, I will answer it on behalf of Queenslanders. No, it is not.

The bill will make explicit changes in the local government arena to allow a degree of donations to occur by property developers to local government campaigns. Again, the Crime and Corruption Commission said—

A similar risk is identified in the anti-circumvention measures in s127AA of the Bill. The requirement to separately collect and account for property developer donors' 'restricted donations' does not avoid the prospect that the receiving party could then allocate other commensurate funding to a local government candidate giving rise to an indirect benefit, or at least the perception of influence.

What does that mean? It means that a property developer can donate to a local government campaign for administrative purposes—things like hiring staff and renting premises—but cannot donate for electoral purposes—things like printing election materials. This, in effect, creates a back door where a local government campaign can reprioritise money they would have used on administrative purposes for electoral purposes because a property developer has given them funds for administrative purposes. How is that consistent with the Belcarra recommendations? How is it consistent with a strong electoral framework in Queensland? The short answer is: it appears not to be.

Before I turn to the increase in actual money which will flow into the electoral system in Queensland, let me address the elephant in the room or the main attack which those opposite will no doubt repeat like mindless parrots dancing and singing to their political masters' tunes. Unions are different to property developers, as was outlined by the Australia Institute during the public hearing.

**Mr Powell** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, member for Glass House. The member for Gaven has the call.

**Ms SCANLON:** 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—multiple workers in that sector, let's say—and not directly to the trade unions, so the financial incentives are very different. To be clear, trade unions are not-for-profit entities that stand up for their collective members' interests; property developers are for-profit. They are individuals or a company who generally have one goal, and that is to make money.

**Mr Hunt** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Nicklin, you will have your turn.

**Ms SCANLON:** The Attorney-General in her speech stated that the former LNP leader of the opposition who became the Premier—which for clarity was the member for Broadwater, not the member for Nanango—vowed during the pre-election leaders' debate that the LNP would repeal the ban on political donations from property developers at state elections. While that might be the case—

Debate, on motion of Ms Scanlon, adjourned.