



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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ELECTORAL LAWS (RESTORING ELECTORIAL FAIRNESS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms MARR** (Thuringowa—LNP) (3.47 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the electoral amendment bill, another piece of legislation that delivers on the Crisafulli government's election commitments to restore fairness, prioritise victims and enhance safety in our democratic process. In this speech I will touch on three points that have dominated conversations in Thuringowa around this bill: (1) protecting vulnerable candidates by allowing the use of post-office boxes or alternative addresses on authorisation statements; (2) restoring a level playing field in political donations by treating trade unions and property developers equally; and (3) ensuring that serious criminals serving sentences of one year or more cannot vote in elections.

I point out the vital protections this bill affords to those brave individuals who put themselves forward as candidates, especially those who live alone or stand as independents without the safety net of party machinery or extensive support networks. For these Queenslanders, the simple act of running for office should not come at the cost of their personal security or that of their loved ones. By allowing the use of post-office boxes or alternative addresses on authorisation statements, we are erecting a crucial barrier against potential harassment or even worse, ensuring that no-one has to broadcast their home location to the world just to participate in democracy. This is a fundamental safeguard for vulnerable candidates who might otherwise be deterred from serving their communities.

Maybe the member for Gaven should speak to someone who has experienced someone aggressively knocking on their door when they are home on their own. The member's laughter about that earlier would indicate that side of the House has absolutely no idea. Let me share a personal insight that underscores the urgency of this reform. During the last Townsville local election this very issue was brought starkly to my attention by several aspiring councillors—-independent voices, some living alone—who voiced genuine fears about revealing their residential details amid a heated campaign. Their stories highlighted how the old rules exposed them unnecessarily to risks, potentially curtailing diverse participation in our electoral process. The Crisafulli government refuses to let such barriers persist. Instead, we are empowering all candidates to step up safely, fostering a more inclusive and secure pathway to public service for everyone.

Let's delve deeper into fairness of electoral donations. The Queensland Labor opposition said in their statement of reservation that under their administration they increased transparency and accountability, and just three lines under that they stated that they implemented recommendations from the Crime and Corruption Commission to prohibit property developers from making donations in relation to the Belcarra report. Let's look at that. The Operation Belcarra recommendation never included the state Electoral Act. That operation was about local government elections. The statewide ban on property developer political donations introduced by Labor was fundamentally at odds with recommendation 20 from the Crime and Corruption Commission's Operation Belcarra inquiry, which concentrated exclusively on local government electoral processes. The existing ban on property developers donating to local government election campaigns in Queensland remains firmly in place, and donors will continue to be required to make declarations as mandated under electoral laws.

The Crisafulli government proudly delivers on another election commitment by restoring a true level playing field in political donations, ensuring that trade unions and property developers are once again treated equally and eligible to support state election campaigns. Equal and fair: two simple words that those opposite could never quite grasp, because their real aim was never fairness at all. No, their cynical intention was always to tilt the playing field deliberately in their own favour—rigging the rules with one hand while preaching purity with the other. They slapped a ban on property developers for state elections, all while letting their union mates pour millions of dollars of funds unchecked—a blatant double standard dressed up as virtue. This was not about cleaning up politics; it was a calculated electoral stitch-up—a financial gerrymander designed to disadvantage one side and protect their own. Queenslanders saw through their hypocrisy, and this Crisafulli government is ending it and restoring true equality so no-one gets special treatment and no-one gets special punishment.

The Premier stated unequivocally during the second leaders debate on 16 October 2024 that he would repeal the ban on donations from property developers and industry bodies predominantly comprised of them, declaring it ‘fundamentally and philosophically an electoral financial gerrymander’. He rightly highlighted how the former Labor government imposed a special rule for developers while applying a different standard to unions. The Premier was crystal clear before Queenslanders went to the polls: there should be an even playing field—either the same rules for everyone or no donations at all. Queenslanders heard that message, endorsed it and entrusted this government with the mandate to make this law and others.

In line with the Crisafulli government’s unwavering commitment to put victims first finally, criminals serving a sentence of imprisonment or detention for one year or more will no longer be permitted to vote in state and local elections or in referendums. This is about basic justice. Those who break the law in serious ways should not have a say in choosing the very lawmakers who uphold it.

Those opposite not only weakened our criminal justice system at every turn; they shamefully opened the prison gates wider for criminals to influence elections from behind bars. In 2019 they changed the law not to protect society but to prioritise the so-called rights of prisoners—allowing anyone serving fewer than three years to vote. This was a deliberate softening of standards that let serious offenders keep their democratic voice while victims continued to suffer the consequences. As the Attorney-General has rightly declared, the LNP believes law-breakers should not get to elect our lawmakers. We are determined to prioritise victims over criminals. Those who flagrantly disregard the law through more serious offences should forfeit the privilege—not the right but the privilege—of participating in the democratic process that maintains order in our community.

Prisoners serving sentences of between one and three years could have been convicted of offences such as burglary, assault occasioning bodily harm, unlawful use of a motor vehicle, sexual assault or indecent treatment of children—and the list, sadly, goes on. Burglary that shatters lives, assaults that leave lasting scars, sexual crimes that destroy trust and innocence: are these not serious enough for the Labor opposition? Do they truly believe these acts are trivial and unworthy of consequences at the ballot box? Their refusal to draw a firm line exposes their priorities once again: criminals over victims, weakness over justice. Queenslanders rejected that mindset at the election, and this bill ensures we never return to it.

The committee made one recommendation in its report: that the bill be passed. I support that recommendation today.