




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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CRIME AND CORRUPTION (RESTORING REPORTING POWERS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (3.41 pm): As we have heard, this bill addresses a longstanding issue with the operation of the Crime and Corruption Commission, or the CCC, where the Australian High Court have found that the Crime and Corruption Act provided no power for the CCC to publish reports on investigations that do not end in corruption charges. This had the effect of stopping the release of reports such as the one into former MP Jackie Trad. Hence, this new bill addresses that court decision and provides a broad discretionary power for the CCC to report and make public statements about ‘corruption matters’, regardless of ultimately whether there are corruption charges.

A key issue found by the Queensland Law Society with the bill is the definition of ‘corruption matter’ in that the definition is overly broad and could produce unintended consequences. The department simply responded that it was government policy to bring in such changes. However, the unintended consequences must be considered, such as the definition covering frivolous or vexatious matters, cases that do not rise to serious or systemic corruption, and cases not yet finalised. While overall this is an important yet small reform of our public administration in efforts of transparency, the government needs to tackle a much wider set of issues to move Queensland forward and build trust in this arena.

First, I will go to controversial appointments. It is important that all appointments should have no conflicts and to avoid even the appearance of conflicts. Second, as I have been advocating for many years, the committee system of parliament needs an overhaul to properly fulfil the role as a parliamentary review system as envisaged in the Fitzgerald report. Currently we still have continual complaints by stakeholders that they have not had time to properly scrutinise proposed legislation, that government chairs have casting votes and that there is no routine publication of decisions and voting within committees—which all do not create the needed environment for bipartisan agreements or the transparency sought by Queenslanders.

Despite having public works in portfolio committee terms of reference, we see little to no examination of public works or effective oversight of subordinate legislation. Potential reforms have been submitted numerous times, including for a more efficient chamber where minor legislation could be handled by reformed committees, as is done in other unicameral parliaments effectively. The government can demonstrate a commitment to better decision-making and collaboration by sending a public inquiry terms of reference to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly, instead of us still waiting—I think it has now been two years—for the CLA to make a decision as to whether a review is to be held.

Additionally, as part of better resource management and outcomes, we need to invest in addressing the public sector capability gaps identified in several reports. *Fault lines*, the independent COVID-19 review report, identified particularly the need for seeking broader advice and collaboration as well as greater transparency. The Coaldrake report identified a loss of capacity, compounded with a

culture unwilling to give unfashionable points of views and dominated by short-term political thinking. I am sure we have heard this before! Given all of this, no wonder we have ended up in many crises—housing and otherwise.

We must—I reiterate, we must—improve the transparency in government based on the Coaldrake blueprint. Yes, some recommendations have been implemented such as the release of cabinet documents. However, as seen in recent cabinet meetings, the use of ‘oral briefings’ means no briefing documents. There have been at least five oral briefings in the short life of this new government. Coaldrake also stated that he hoped greater scrutiny over what is deemed commercial in confidence will provide the impetus for a cultural shift towards much more openness in government, yet we have not seen any reforms to the right-to-information regime to address this. Information should be ‘pushed’ out versus the current ‘pull’ model.

The new government has a real opportunity to make much needed improvements to the operation of this chamber, and government, and to take Queensland into a new era of efficiency, transparency and integrity. May they take the bold step and not replay what occurred this morning with these last-minute amendments that have not gone through the appropriate process. Thank you, as always, to the committee, the secretariat and submitters to the inquiry into this bill.