



Speech by

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Hansard Wednesday, 15 September 2010

MINISTERIAL AND OTHER OFFICE HOLDER STAFF BILL; INTEGRITY REFORM (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL; PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE BILL

Dr ROBINSON (Cleveland—LNP) (4.10 pm): I rise to contribute to the cognate debate of the government's bills titled the Integrity Reform (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill, the Ministerial and Other Office Holder Staff Bill and the Public Interest Disclosure Bill. I commend to the House and to the public the excellent speech by the Leader of the Opposition and the speeches of my other LNP colleagues.

I wish to make a modest contribution to the debate and focus my attention on the integrity reform bill. This bill deals with issues relating to the functions of ambulance officers, the Auditor-General, the Integrity Commissioner, the Ombudsman, civil liability, fire and rescue services, public sector ethics, among other areas. The public are crying out for members of parliament and for political parties to lead the way in society when it comes to matters of character and integrity. But they are looking for the real deal, for genuine reform. Alas, they will be disappointed with this bill as it delivers very little that could be termed 'reform'.

While I support any true integrity reform, the amendments to these bills are more about spin than substance. They are more about the appearance of cleaning up this Labor government's act than any real reform. The Premier seems to think that as long as she says the key words 'integrity, ethics, accountability' her government has somehow delivered integrity reform. The Premier seeks to use these bills to hide the manifest failures of her government in this regard.

This government has broken trust with the people of Queensland many times and the trust factor today for this failed Bligh Labor state government is languishing at record lows. The people of Queensland and Cleveland were misled by this government in the lead-up to the 2009 state election. This government misled the people of Queensland about the sale of Queensland assets. It deceived the people of Queensland about the petrol tax that it imposed after saying that it would not. No-one believes this government anymore. So when it tries to introduce new integrity measures people have low expectations.

Many segments of society no longer believe this government can deliver. For example, commuters feel betrayed by Labor's fuel tax, the increases in vehicle registration and expensive and inflexible train fares under the go card system. Residents feel cheated about the government-induced hike in the price of electricity and water. Boaties and fishers do not trust this government to manage our fish stocks and to protect their rights to fish, while the Greens party influences Labor's policies. This legislation today will not restore faith in this failed government.

The Westminster system is supposed to deliver high levels of integrity, accountability and openness. Sadly, this Labor government has found ways to get around these principles of accountability and integrity. It continues to find new ways of getting around even its own rules. It frequently shifts its own goalposts and the Gordon Nuttall case was the classic. In order to protect corrupt minister Gordon Nuttall from being considered for prosecution by the DPP, as recommended by the CMC, the government recalled

parliament, repealed a specific provision of the Criminal Code about lying to parliament that Nuttall had breached—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! There have been several rulings over the last couple of days about the use of the word that you have just used. I ask you to retract it and refrain from using it again please.

Dr ROBINSON: I withdraw. The government substituted instead a breach of standing orders and then used its numbers to immediately clear Nuttall of such a breach. This Premier was intimately involved in this whole process.

Then there are the attempts to either be sneaky to circumvent due political process or get around the government's own rules. For example, with respect to the Civil Liability Act and the issue of saying sorry, we were told by the Premier that the amendments to this act were 'to allow apologies to be made without being taken as an admission of legal liability'. We were then told, 'This amendment will allow the government, as well as any other person, to acknowledge mistakes through an apology where the actions may have caused harm.' This is clearly a sneaky attempt to appear to be sorry but without making proper amends.

Then there is the recent reappointment of the Police Commissioner. The proper process was that the CMC chair, former Justice Moynihan, was to approve this appointment. The government claims the reappointment without his approval was just a communication error between the minister, the chairman and the Premier. It seems more likely that the government did not follow its own rules and its own proper due process. To make things worse, instead of waiting for the CMC chair to complete his assessment, they ploughed ahead and, rather than reappoint him, they sneakily extended his contract for two years. Again, they found a way to get around their own rules.

The next chapter of this sorry saga that is currently unfolding is that the Premier is seriously considering changing the electoral system in Queensland using comments from the AEC to mask her real motives. So, after deceiving its way through the last state election, we see this Labor government planning to cheat its way through the next one. It has no confidence in itself left to win by fair means, so plans are underway to try to win by other means.

In recent times, in the light of Labor corruption, Labor cronyism, Labor mates deals and Labor lobbyists, this government resisted calls from the opposition to a royal commission to get to the bottom of Labor's dirty dealings and to restore integrity and accountability to government. Only an independent royal commission that is free to scrutinise and explore every aspect of this government's culture would bring secret deeds to light so that they could be purged and integrity restored to this House. Alas, that is likely to never happen.

Labor's new integrity bills, as with previous integrity bills, brought about by this government will not bring to an end this government's culture of corruption and cronyism. In fact, Labor's bill is yet another attempt to give the impression that the Premier and this government are indeed fighting corruption.

Mr Wallace: What are you trying to hide?

Mr Hoolihan: You want to fight it because it will get you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Keppel.

Dr ROBINSON: They are all getting very heated on the other side. Then there is the issue of lying in parliament.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have already warned you once about the use of that word. I will not warn you again.

Dr ROBINSON: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The government's integrity bill does not prevent members from being deceptive in parliament or in one of its committees. Again, under this Labor government, we have seen the erosion of integrity in this House. In conclusion, these three bills do little to enhance real integrity in the parliament and government but are a smokescreen for real integrity reform.