

ELECTORAL REFORM

667. Mr G. BAKER to the Minister for Electoral Affairs:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to boosting transparency and accountability around political donations.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on the government's electoral reforms, including the new laws introduced to Parliament today?
- (2) Can the minister outline how these reforms will improve transparency and accountability around donations to political parties and candidates?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(2) A lot has been said in the chamber already about the Electoral Amendment (Finance and Other Matters) Bill 2023. I endorse what the Premier said earlier in question time—that accountability, transparency and integrity form the cornerstones of this legislation. The real-time reporting of political donations will introduce both transparency and accountability into the system. We will lower the cap so that all donations of \$1 000 and above will have to be disclosed and the identity of the donor identified. We are introducing real penalties for breaches, with fines of up to \$36 000 and jail for up to three years for people who exceed their expenditure cap.

The Premier was right when he referred to the fact that a bill was introduced to this Parliament back in 2020 to provide accountability. We brought in a bill that would have introduced caps and accountability, but the Liberal Party voted against it. I heard the member for Cottesloe on the radio today, and I think the member for Vasse as well, asking why we are dealing with this now given all the pressures we are facing and all the things we have to deal with. It is because we will have an election in 2025 and the Electoral Commissioner has to deal with these things in advance to get his systems right. *Hansard* of 13 August 2020 recorded the people who voted against electoral transparency, including the member for Cottesloe, who is not here today. The member for Vasse also voted against it. The rest of the Liberals—Mr Kirkup, Mr Marmion—voted against the bill, but we had the numbers and we passed it through the Assembly. The bill then went to the upper house, but we did not have the numbers in the upper house to introduce transparency and integrity to the electoral system before the last election. The Liberals held up the bill in the upper house by sending it off to a committee and it went back and forth. The member for Vasse asked why we are doing this today. It is because the Liberals stopped us doing it before. We would have done this three years ago if not for the Liberal Party's obstinate refusal to let that bill pass the Legislative Council.

It is true that since I became the minister, I have perhaps extended the bill.

Mr P.J. Rundle: How many trees did you cut down?

Several members interjected.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I am glad that the substance of the opposition's approach to this bill is to question how much paper was used in producing the bill! What a puerile, silly objection. The reason we are doing it now, in 2023, is that it must be done for the public of Western Australia. The reason it is happening in 2023 and did not happen in 2020 is that the Liberals blocked it in 2020 because they had the numbers in the upper house and wanted to keep the members of the Liberal 500 Club and their donations secret. Fair enough. The acid has now dropped in front of them. The big test will be whether the Liberal Party repeats its pathetic performance of 2020 or comes on board with the people of Western Australia—not Labor—who are demanding transparency and accountability in relation to political donations.