

Legislative Council
HANSARD
Thursday, 16 November 2023

ELECTORAL DISCLOSURE AND FUNDING BILL 2022 (No. 25)
Third Reading

[excerpt]

[11.27 a.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise on the third reading to put on the record I will be voting against the bill. It is not a decision I have taken lightly. Most people who have heard me speak, or read any of the materials I have put into the public domain on this issue, know it is a matter close to my heart to see our state have an appropriate political donation disclosure regime in place.

However, we are now faced with a choice of passing a bill which is seriously flawed. It could have been an appropriate and improved bill. What was brought to us by the Government was absolutely disrespectfully insufficient to the Tasmanian people and to us as legislators. We could have improved it. That has been prevented from happening, much against the efforts of most Independents in this place.

What we have before us then, is a choice, which some might characterise as something is better than nothing. I have thought about that long and hard. Is something better than nothing? When I contemplate the bill before us in the state it is in, I do not believe that this something is better than nothing, for the time being. We can do far better and a delay in achieving that is reasonable.

I think there is damage in putting this bill in place. If we were getting even marginal improvements, with no detriment, I could vote for it. In that instance it would be something is better than nothing. But this bill is detrimental to our democracy. The ways it is detrimental will be harder to wind back at a later date. I do not want to see them put it in place.

To be specific, it is clear the bits I am objecting to, where we have landed with this bill, is particularly on the public funding arrangements in this bill, and the fact we have failed to appropriately put in place the accompanying measures that are required to give effect to the benefit of public funding of elections, which I support. If we are to have public funding we must have either caps on expenditure during election periods to go with it and/or donation caps. Without that the public funding that is provided for in this bill is simply a slush fund for the major parties. That is my objection.

It is abhorrent for this to be put through and for the two major parties to have delivered for themselves public funding slush funds for this next election which could well be soon, who knows? It going to be within 18 months. Putting this bill through is a situation of advantaging and enriching themselves for that election. It is unacceptable. The marginal benefits from some of this still insufficient disclosure measures in this bill do not outweigh the detriment of that, in my mind.

I will not be supporting the bill and I encourage other members not to either.

[excerpt end]