

OPEN LETTER: ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN QUEENSLAND

An open letter to Queensland political parties,

The erosion of accountability and transparency has damaged democracy in Queensland. Successive governments have become too close to industry lobbyists and representatives, particularly from the resources industry, undermining public trust in the political process.

The current government has weakened Queensland's anti-corruption watchdog, the Crime and Corruption Commission, and used its almost unlimited Constitutional power to legislate without regard to proportionality or individual liberties. The appointment of Queensland's chief justice has been widely criticised by many of the state's most senior legal figures.

The political parties have a choice: they can offer more of the same, or they can commit to a fresh, principled way of conducting the business of government, for the benefit of all Queenslanders and our unique environment.

On 8 January, a few days after the current election was announced, The Australia Institute wrote to the leaders of all political parties asking each "to commit to the following principles of accountability and good governance put forward by The Honourable Tony Fitzgerald AC QC:

1. Govern for the peace, welfare and good government of the State;
2. Make all decisions and take all actions, including public appointments, in the public interest without regard to personal, party political or other immaterial considerations;
3. Treat all people equally without permitting any person or corporation special access or influence; and
4. Promptly and accurately inform the public of its reasons for all significant or potentially controversial decisions and actions.

The Australia Institute has received responses from Queensland Labor, Bob Katter's Australia Party, Palmer United Party, and the Queensland Greens, all of whom have agreed to adopt the principles if elected.

The Liberal National Party failed to respond.

For these reasons, we the undersigned call on all of Queensland's political parties to commit to these principles of accountability put forward by Tony Fitzgerald and clearly explain to the Queensland electorate, before Election Day, how these principles would be implemented.

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Kate Auty, Vice Chancellor's Fellow, University of Melbourne

Mark Baker-Jones, Special Council, Environment and Planning

John Battams, President, Queensland Council of Unions

Judith Bell, former CMC Commissioner

Dr Justine Bell, University of Queensland

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Jo-Anne Bragg, Solicitor, Environmental Defenders Office (Qld)

Fr Frank Brennan SJ AO

Dr AJ Brown, Professor of Public Policy and Law, Centre for Governance and Public Policy, Griffith University

Richard Carew, Solicitor

Greg Chamberlin, Former Editor, Courier Mail (1987-1991)

Associate Professor Hon Dr Ken Coghill, Monash Governance Research Unit, Monash University

Michael Cope, President, Queensland Council for Civil Liberties

Benedict Coyne, Queensland Convenor, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights

David Crawford, Member of the Independent Community Accountability Network (ICAN)

Gary Crooke QC, Former Queensland Integrity Commissioner

Peter Davis, Former head of QLD Bar Council

Evelyn Doyle, Independent Community Accountability Network

Hon Matt Foley, Barrister and former Qld Attorney-General

Jim Fouras AM

John Grimes, CEO, Solar Council

Drew Hutton, Lock The Gate

Alan Jones AO

Barry Jones, Former Science Minister

Joshua R Jones, Barrister

Stephen Keim SC, Barrister

Glen Martin, Solicitor

Chris McGrath, Barrister

Michael McIver, Solicitor, Holding Redlich

Alex McKean, Barrister

Martin P Moynihan AO QC, Former Queensland Supreme Court Judge

Beryce Nelson, Former Family Services Minister

Margaret O'Donnell AO, Former Chair, Legal Aid Queensland

Terry O'Gorman, Vice President, Queensland Council for Civil Liberties

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