

INTEGRITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

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Every Queensland
community deserves
to be a liveable one

21 July 2023

Mr Linus Power MP
Chair
Economics and Governance Committee

Via email: egc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Power,

RE: LGAQ Submission to Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) is the peak body for local government in Queensland. We are a not-for-profit association set up solely to serve the state's 77 councils and their individual needs. We have been advising, supporting, and representing local councils since 1896, aiding them to improve their operations and strengthen relationships with their communities.

The LGAQ is a member focused, member-led organisation, guided by our Annual Conference resolutions, which form a key plank in our advocacy platform each year.

The LGAQ supports a strong integrity regime that maintains effective local government across Queensland, with openness and transparency in how Councils and elected representatives operate.

Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

The LGAQ notes the Premier, Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk MP introduced the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 (the Bill) on 16 June 2023. The Bill implements recommendations outlined in the *Let the sunshine in: Review of culture and accountability in the Queensland public sector* (Coaldrake Report) and the *Strategic Review of the Integrity Commissioner's Functions* (Yearbury Report).

The LGAQ did not make a submission to the Coaldrake Report, however there was engagement with the Yearbury Report, including a submission – which is noted in that report. We stand by our comments in that submission¹.

As noted in the explanatory notes, the Bill includes amendments to:

- increase regulation of lobbying activity to address the public perception of undue influence on governments, including by clarifying what lobbying activity is and enhancing the regulatory role of the Queensland Integrity Commissioner;
- amend the conditions for registration as a lobbyist to reflect expectations around completing training and managing conflicts of interest;
- introduce a prohibition on a registered lobbyist playing a 'substantial' role for a political party in an election campaign;
- enhance core integrity bodies' independence by increasing the involvement of parliamentary committees in additional funding proposals and contributing to key appointments;
- enhance the jurisdiction of the Queensland Ombudsman to consider complaints about, and initiate investigations of government services provided by non-government entities;
- establish the Office of the Queensland Integrity Commissioner as a statutory body; and

¹ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tableoffice/tabledpapers/2021/5721T1755.pdf> (pages 105-106)



- clarify the trusts that the Auditor-General is required to audit.

As the explanatory notes also indicate, the LGAQ was consulted on the development of this legislation and reviewed draft legislation earlier this year.

In relation to the Bill, provisions relating to local government representatives already exist under section 42 of the *Integrity Act 2009*.

These provisions are working well and have stood the test of time. This is reflected in the Bill, with no additional obligations or requirements on a local government representative included.

There have been a significant number of policy and legislative changes in relation to integrity matters in local government since the Strategic Review of the Functions of the Integrity Commission in 2015, and specifically the Office of Independent Assessor (OIA) was established in late 2018, overseeing changes to regulate the conduct of local government representatives.

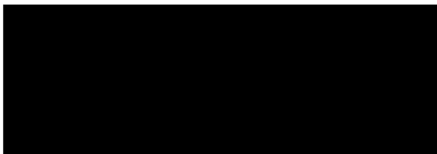
The Parliamentary Inquiry into the functions of the independent assessor and councillor conduct complaints system handed down its report late last year.

We welcomed the State Government response to that Inquiry, with support or in-principle support of all 40 recommendations. We are now waiting for the State to progress those legislative reforms and recommendations, which we are seeking to occur before the end of this year (2023).

The LGAQ has no concerns or recommendations in relation to the Bill before your Committee.

If you would like to discuss submission in more detail, please contact Nathan Ruhle, Manager – Intergovernmental Relations on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,



Alison Smith
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER