



# **LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SMALL BUSINESS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE**

**Members present:**

Mr JP Lister MP—Chair  
Mr AJ Baillie MP  
Mr MA Boothman MP  
Ms NA Boyd MP  
Ms B Asif MP  
Mr LP Power MP

**Staff present:**

Dr A Cavill—Committee Secretary  
Mr Z Dadic—Assistant Committee Secretary

## **PUBLIC BRIEFING—INQUIRY INTO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (EMPOWERING COUNCILS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2025**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Friday, 16 January 2026**

**Brisbane**

## FRIDAY, 16 JANUARY 2026

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### **The committee met at 12.32 pm.**

**CHAIR:** Good afternoon. I declare open this public briefing for the committee's inquiry into the Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. I am James Lister, the member for Southern Downs and chair of the committee. With me at the public briefing today are: Adam Baillie MP, member for Townsville; Mark Boothman MP, member for Theodore; Nikki Boyd MP, member for Pine Rivers who is substituting for Michael Healy MP, member for Cairns; Linus Power MP, member for Logan who is substituting for Joan Pease MP, member for Lytton; and Bisma Asif MP, member for Sandgate who is substituting for Margie Nightingale MP, member for Inala and deputy chair.

This briefing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only committee members and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the briefing at the discretion of the committee.

I remind committee members that departmental officers are here to provide factual or technical information. Any questions seeking an opinion about policy should be directed to the minister or left to debate on the floor of the House.

These proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live on the parliament's website. I welcome anyone who is joining us live that way. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. I ask everyone to please turn your mobile phones off or to silent mode.

**CARRIGAN, Ms Emily, Acting Deputy Director-General, Local Government Division, Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers**

**HOLDEN, Mr Karl, Acting Director, Policy and Legislation, Local Government Division, Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers**

**NAU, Ms Kristy, Acting Executive Director, Strategy and Service Delivery, Local Government Division, Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers**

**CHAIR:** I now welcome representatives of the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers. I invite you to brief the committee on the bill, after which committee members will have some questions for you.

**Ms Carrigan:** Thank you, Chair. We have not prepared an opening statement. Our response to the submissions 1 to 40 were provided to the committee on Wednesday. We are happy to take any questions from the committee in relation to those submissions and any subsequent submissions that have been provided to us.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Carrigan.

**Ms BOYD:** The bill requires senior executive employees to be appointed by a panel comprising of the mayor, the CEO and either the deputy mayor or a committee chair. The LGAQ submits that this measure can already be achieved in the current framework through policy. What problem, evidenced by data or cased examples, is the change intended to fix?

**Ms Carrigan:** The intent behind the amendment is to satisfy the community that their expectation is that the councillors, the mayor, deputy mayor and relevant committee chairs have a role in determining the way that the council operations operate. This is evidenced through the existing requirement for councils to approve the organisational structure of council. They already have some skin in the game about how to best set up council to deliver their priorities and to implement their strategic direction. You are absolutely correct; they can currently, by leave of the CEO, participate on the panel.

The amendments do not necessarily restrict councils in how they perform their recruitment decisions. Councils are able to develop their own policies and procedures about recruitment. For example, a recruitment for a general manager for asset management might require some specialist skills. There might be a councillor on the council who has some experience. I am sure council would welcome the input of that councillor throughout the shortlisting process. In many cases, councils also use the services of a recruitment adviser. So, there are lots of different ways to ensure there are appropriate inputs into that decision; it is just that the final decision is made by that panel that is mandated to include the CEO, mayor and deputy mayor.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** We heard comments today around the necessary support when it comes to the conflicts of interest changes. What is the department planning to accommodate this to actually best educate councillors about the new requirements?

**Ms Carrigan:** I will just do a quick introduction and then I will pass to my colleague, Kristy, to go into more detail. You are absolutely right; we are proposing the transitional period for the implementation of those specific provisions, that is, to allow both us as the department to develop appropriate guidance material and also councils to work through what of their policies, procedures and training materials might also need to be amended.

We are very conscious that such a significant change does require appropriate supports. We have online our LG Leaders suite of training modules and we also have a whole range of draft or model policies and procedures that are available to councils to use so that they do not have to start from scratch themselves. There will be a whole range of materials. The LG Leaders module for training will be updated to reflect the changes once they are passed, if they are passed, so there will be a significant amount of work. We are anticipating to require that full six months to ensure the local government sector is appropriately supported, both councillors and operational staff. Kristy, did you want to add to that?

**Ms Nau:** I think Emily has covered the program-type approach that the department takes. We take a twofold approach to training for mayors and councillors. The department recognises that each of the councils across Queensland is in a unique operating environment and that training has to be fit for purpose. We have our regional services group who works closely with councils to design and deliver tailored training sessions that respond to local needs or issues or specific circumstances, learning styles et cetera. We have regional teams across Queensland that are frequently out on the ground in communities, providing face-to-face training and support where required. As Emily said, that can be in line with our program but also tailored to suit an on-the-ground issue, for example.

Following the 2024 local government elections, regional officers visited councils across Queensland to introduce them to our LG Leaders program and also to provide ongoing support to mayors and councillors so they are aware of their obligations. This support ranged from brief telephone discussions to talk through various issues to face-to-face delivery of mandatory topics, right through to where we had a computer lab-style environment to ensure everybody is aware of their roles.

**Mr POWER:** The CCC has said they have considerable concerns about the risk of underdisclosure under a self-assessment mechanism. Given that this bill goes back to the 2018 framework about which the CCC had concerns, what evidence has the department relied on to conclude councillors are better placed to self-assess the conflicts under this upcoming model?

**Ms Carrigan:** Again, I will do a brief introductory statement and then pass to my colleague, Karl, to go into more detail about the changes, if that is helpful. As you mentioned, the bill does revert to the councillor conflict of interests framework that was in place between 2013 and early 2018. The Queensland government considers that this previous framework, based on the material personal interests and conflicts of interest, strikes a better balance between allowing councillors to get on with the job for which they were elected and ensuring transparency and accountability, and that the decisions are made in the public interest. This position is based on feedback from stakeholders indicating that the current framework is too complex and is vulnerable to exploitation by councillors for political purposes.

Concerns regarding the existing arrangement's complexity include that it can be difficult for councillors to understand whether they have a close personal relationship with a person that could give rise to a conflict of interest. This can be particularly challenging for councillors in smaller communities where every member of the community may know one another.

Stakeholder concerns about the current framework's vulnerability to manipulation for political purposes primarily relate to the requirements that councillors report other councillors' potential conflicts of interest and that councillors collectively vote on whether a conflicted councillor is authorised to participate in a matter before council.

The proposed framework is designed to ensure that councillors manage conflicts between their private interests and public duties, backed by significant penalties for councillors who breach the trust placed in them by their communities. The onus will be placed on councillors to consider whether they have a conflict of interest in a matter and to take appropriate action if they believe they have a real or perceived conflict. The proposed framework recognises that other councillors of a local government are not necessarily better placed than a councillor themselves to determine if they can act in the public interest.

These amendments will remove unnecessary red tape to allow conflicts to be managed faster, depoliticise the management of conflicts and re-empower councillors to get on with the job. I will pass to Karl now after that introductory statement.

**Mr Holden:** I think my colleague, Emily, covered the broad-level policy intent which is to move away from the risk of any kind of use of that power to vote on whether a councillor has an interest or not, and to place that onus squarely on the councillor who has all the information available to them. As my colleague mentioned, it is backed by significant penalties if a councillor breaches that trust that the community has placed in them. There are significant penalties.

**Mr POWER:** Councils can have very full agendas, and something might have a clause that is in reference to something that one of the other councillors may know about. We heard from Balonne councillors who said it was very helpful where a council could bring up, 'Oh, don't you have an involvement in clause 4?', and then the councillor in case can say, 'Oh, yes. Sorry, I had not been aware that this thing touched on that. I want to disclose to the council.' Is that not practical and good? I understand you restated the policy aims, but there was nothing in the evidence you used about the risk of underdisclosure that was raised by the CCC? Firstly, can you comment on the scenario whether or not it is useful for people to say, 'Do you realise that this may run across that? It is not stated that way', those type of issues?

**Ms Carrigan:** I agree. You are absolutely spot-on, particularly in really high-functioning councils where there is that collaborative approach. There is nothing stopping a councillor under the new arrangement or the proposed arrangement from raising that within a council meeting; there is just no positive obligation on them to do so.

**Mr POWER:** You said sometimes there are areas of conflict. If the councillor knows there is a conflict and they think, 'I am not required to raise this, however if I do raise it, I may be causing ill will, people may second guess my judgement or they may see me differently.' That allows that conflict to slide through. Is that not what the CCC identified as one of the significant risks of underdisclosure?

**Mr Holden:** Yes, I take the point that where there is a statutory requirement it would make it easier for a councillor to—

**Mr POWER:** They can say, 'Sorry, mate, I am required to disclose this. I know about that. You might not have realised it. I am required to disclose.'

**Mr Holden:** Yes, but as my colleague mentioned, in those councils where there is a good operating environment, councillors would. As Balonne Shire Council, Mayor O'Toole mentioned, there were a good couple of examples where councillors were helping each other out and just reminding, and also the standing agenda item about workshops and the schedule of workshops, as I was just reminded. As my colleague says, there would be nothing to stop the councillor doing that kind of friendly reminder.

**Mr POWER:** In some cases that may be uncomfortable, but is that a bad thing; that we put conflicts on the table, even if they are a little uncomfortable, rather than letting them slide through?

**CHAIR:** I think you have made your point and we are getting to the realms of seeking opinions.

**Mr POWER:** It is a good point.

**CHAIR:** I will give you a little bit of latitude, Ms Carrigan, and then we will move onto another question.

**Mr POWER:** I could phrase it differently if you think I have made that point.

**CHAIR:** No, it is all right. I am happy for—

**Mr POWER:** How will councillors—

**CHAIR:** Member for Logan, it is okay. I think the question has been understood. Is that correct; you would be in a position to answer that, Ms Carrigan?

**Mr POWER:** Between the material personal interests and the ordinary political interests, given the complexity of that test, without discussion, without saying, 'This might be an issue. How do we discuss this?'—without others putting that forward, how will they understand the complexity of that test without that discussion publicly?

**Ms Carrigan:** We do propose, as part of the implementation, to provide significant training resources to help councillors understand what their obligations are and what 'good' looks like. That would be our response to that question.

**CHAIR:** Could you please illuminate for us the background to, and the requests for, amendments concerning access to essential quarry materials? It sounds like a kind of minor thing, but I gather that the councils that are maintaining gravel roads and so forth have made a big deal about this in representations to the department. Could you talk about that, please?

**Ms Carrigan:** Section 143 of the Local Government Act provides a head of power for local councils to access quarry materials on state-owned property for the purposes of delivering their services, particularly in emergent or disaster recovery scenarios, but not limited to those scenarios. The amendments we are proposing in the bill bring into line the notice provisions. Currently, the notice provisions are to give seven days' notice to the owner of the property. This just brings it back into line with that emergent or disaster-related scenario, so it is where reasonably practical.

**Ms ASIF:** In relation to Brisbane City Council, the bill limits the information Brisbane City councillors can ask the CEO for, including some documents that are created for civic cabinet which is part of their Establishment and Coordination Committee. Can you explain in simple terms what types of documents councillors will no longer be able to see?

**Mr Holden:** The policy intent provisions is to create a space for civic cabinet—it has some similarities to state cabinet, but not exactly the same—to deliberate and make decisions. There is a provision in there that would restrict access to documents—say, submissions to that body, discussion papers, their decisions—until after a decision has been made, at which point those provisions of section 171(8) of the City of Brisbane Act would then kick back in, so councillors would be able to obtain that information after a matter is finally decided. The policy intent is trying to create that deliberation space basically and then there will be disclosure afterwards. I note Brisbane City Council have made some further comments in their submission about the definition of what those documents may be, and we will work with Brisbane City Council on that.

**Ms ASIF:** To clarify, Brisbane City Council has nine committees. With respect to the civic cabinet you mentioned, you confirmed that there is no cabinet; it is just another committee of council. The concern there is if there are documents that are discussed in this committee which councillors are then not able to obtain, that does not seem very transparent. What safeguards will be put in place to ensure that elected officials will not be limited in being able to access that information in order to make sure that they can be scrutinised in a timely manner?

**Mr Holden:** Currently, the safeguard is that mechanism which says after a matter is finally resolved, the documents become available.

**Ms ASIF:** Is there a limit on that or is that up to council to decide?

**Mr Holden:** There is a regulation-making power to specify what that means. We will be working on that as part of the implementation of what 'finally resolved' actually means. In some matters, there may be partial decisions through a process until a final decision has been made. There is a regulation-making power—

**Ms ASIF:** There is none framed currently; you are still working on that?

**Mr Holden:** Not currently. We will be working on that as part of implementation.

**Ms ASIF:** What will be the consultation process for that?

**Mr Holden:** The usual. It will be consultation in the local government sector and Brisbane City Council.

**CHAIR:** Following on from the member for Sandgate's questions regarding the civic cabinet, I heard her say that it is effectively another committee. I suppose that is not in dispute, but is it the case that that particular committee undertakes functions which are analogous to those of a cabinet and that the conventions of cabinet government, which have found over hundreds of years the necessity of having confidentiality of proceedings in order to have collective responsibility for decisions, makes the unavailability of certain documents which are cabinet-in-confidence a necessary evil for the functioning of local government in the case of the Brisbane City Council which has a civic cabinet?

**Mr Holden:** As I mentioned at the start, there are similarities between the Establishment and Coordination Committee, to give it its formal title, and cabinet. They are not exactly the same, but it does discharge some executive functions at the cabinet which is why the policy intent is to try to create that deliberation space of confidentiality whilst a decision is being made and then transparency after the decision has been made.

**Ms BOYD:** How many amendments, insertions and omissions does this bill propose?

**Mr Holden:** I may have to take that on notice and we can get back to you on that.

**Ms BOYD:** I note in the written materials that the department outlines stakeholders that were consulted with in the formation of this bill. Did the Crime and Corruption Commission form part of the department's stakeholder consultation process over the two weeks in May 2025 or any time since?

**Ms Carrigan:** Yes, to both. They were consulted initially and then more recently.

**Mr BAILLIE:** As the member for Townsville, I have the distinct pleasure and honour of also representing Palm Island, an Indigenous council, and I am very interested in the changes that are being made to the rating powers for Indigenous councils and what impact that may have on their ability to levy charges on that which typically rates might cover. Would you be able to elaborate on that a little bit, expand and clarify that for me, please?

**Ms Carrigan:** I will probably just give a brief overview and if there are any more specific parts that you would like to us to consider, we would be happy to take those. The powers for Indigenous councils to rate are limited at the moment. Indigenous councils may issue service charges to members of their communities, landholders or land occupiers. Those service charges are linked to the services that are provided by council. In most cases, they are sewerage, power, utilities, rubbish collection—all of those services typically provided by a council. However, due to the complex tenure arrangements in a number of those council areas, they do not levy rates in the same way that a mainstream council does. The amendments in the bill relate to just the number of councils. We have expanded those councils to reflect their existing arrangements. It does provide an opportunity into the future for those councils, when they are able, to levy rates which requires them to get a valuation from the Valuer-General. There are different pieces of legislation that govern that process.

**Mr BAILLIE:** As a follow-up, let's say there was an industrial estate, or something of that nature, on Palm—I do not know the status of these other councils or home ownership. I guess the landscape and the complexity would be significantly increased. These changes would aid that, would they, or hamper it?

**Ms Carrigan:** I think Palm Island is a great example where they are going down the pathway of home ownership—reverting some of what was traditionally social housing to ownership for community members. In the future, once the council is set up to be able to levy those rates, there is an opportunity for them to do so. As I said, it does require the Valuer-General to issue a land valuation to those properties. That would be a little bit into the future, but that would be the pathway; you are correct, yes.

**Ms ASIF:** I wanted to follow up on Brisbane City Council. Why did the department believe it was appropriate to restrict elected councillors from being able to access information which would be used to make major decisions that affect Brisbane residents? Was there a problem identified? Was that brought up with you in any specific circumstance? What made you make that decision?

**CHAIR:** I will point out that that question borders on asking you for an opinion. Obviously you will respond in a way that—

**Mr POWER:** I think she was asking directly for evidence.

**Ms ASIF:** I am not asking for an opinion. I am asking why the department make the changes in the bill as proposed—

**CHAIR:** You asked why the department thought it was necessary, so that is asking for an opinion. That is okay. I am happy for the question to be put, but I give you latitude, Mr Holden, in accordance with the independence of you as public servants.

**Mr Holden:** I will go back to what the policy intent is which is acknowledging the civic cabinet does have similarities and does make some executive decision-making, and the policy intent is to recognise that there are deliberations and that robust governance does require some debate about difficult topics in confidence. That is why there is that initial carve-out, but ultimately once the decision is finally resolved or made by the committee, then that information will become available.

**Ms ASIF:** Noting that not all decisions that are made at this committee are brought to council, so councillors have to look through the minutes and papers that are then made public to make sure they are aware of what is happening in their local area. The concern there is if that is not available and that is classified as a cabinet document, what opportunities are they then given to ensure that they are kept in the loop about decisions that are being made in their wards?

**Mr Holden:** I think it is that point that once a decision has been made, that information is available and therefore can be scrutinised and the accountability is there.

**Ms ASIF:** In regards to code of conduct referrals that are currently in place—I know this bill makes some amendments to that—once that comes in, what happens to the referrals that are currently pending or in place? Would you like to clarify, please?

**Mr Holden:** There are transitional provisions in the bill that provide that if a matter has been referred to from the OIA to a council that there is a potential conduct breach, that matter is to be investigated and to be finalised.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** Out of curiosity, why are we doing this bill now? Why now are we actually putting this bill forward? What concerns have been out there in the local government community? What have the LGAQ been saying or pushing for things? I am curious as to why this has happened now and not previously.

**Mr POWER:** Without straying into matters of policy which (inaudible)

**CHAIR:** I will grant you that one, but the question stands. Would you like to respond, Ms Carrigan?

**Ms Carrigan:** Why now? The government has committed to rebuilding the state's relationship with Queensland's 77 local governments by re-empowering them to serve their communities via fit-for-purpose legislation without unnecessary regulatory burdens. We heard earlier from LGAQ talking to some of the specific provisions of the Equal Partners in Government Agreement which talked to resetting that relationship, having fewer regulatory burdens imposed on councils, allowing them to do the work that they need to, to support their communities. The bill also delivers on commitments outlined in our minister's charter letter with a focused suite of amendments aimed at addressing priority issues which have been identified by the local government sector.

It is important to make these changes now as the bill lays the groundwork for further reform which will be informed by a number of committees and reports, including the Local Government Red Tape Reduction Taskforce report, the local government depreciation review, review of the local government electoral expenditure caps scheme and the proposed parliamentary committee review of the councillor conduct framework, including the Office of the Independent Assessor and the Councillor Conduct Tribunal.

**Ms BOYD:** My question is in relation to the forced resignation to run for state parliament. What documented instances of harm, misconduct and governance failure have arisen from councillors remaining in office while running for state parliament?

**Ms Carrigan:** I think it is hard to talk to specifics around instances of harm other than the general uncertainty that it provides to the community. When the community votes for local government elections, they are voting for their councillor or representatives for a period of four years. This is making it clear from the outset that your election to the role of councillor is really important to your community and that you are making that commitment for four years. There will always be circumstances where a councillor may have to resign before that four-year period ends. This is just making it clear that there is an expectation so that you are continuing to deliver for your community.

**Ms BOYD:** Is the department able to point to any integrity investigations, court decisions or CCC findings that recommend automatic resignation on nomination?

**Ms Carrigan:** No.

**CHAIR:** Can you advise is it necessary to have such pronouncements or adverse findings in order for the government to legislate on the matter?

**Ms Carrigan:** No.

**Ms ASIF:** Going back to Brisbane City Council, I represent an area which is in Brisbane City Council so I want to confirm that if a councillor believes they have had information that has been wrongfully withheld, will there be any recourses in the framework to ensure that they can pursue that? What happens if that is the case?

**Mr Holden:** The provisions amend the current section 171 which basically allow councillors to request information or assistance from the CEO, and then there are requirements on the CEO to disclose that information. That would be where any redress or comments would be made—to the CEO. There are also requirements on the CEO to actually provide that information within certain timeframes, so that is where it would land.

**Ms ASIF:** Again, this could be because I simply am unable to understand how this is promoting transparency and accountability because we are limiting elected officials from accessing information when they are elected by the people of Brisbane, the residents, to make decisions for them and be their voice in council. I am really struggling, especially as you are saying the framework has not been Brisbane

decided, how councillors are going to be able to hold a councillor and a CEO to account where it comes to their local areas and decisions. You are saying it will be made public, that there will be a time frame when that becomes public, but you have not been able to tell me what that time frame is. Is it a week, two weeks, three weeks, a month, three years, 10 years?

**CHAIR:** The answer for that is a matter for government, rather than the department. I will go to the member for Theodore with the next question.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** My question goes to redistributions and how the process actually works. Given that this legislation is being put forward now and there is obviously a certain period of time for a council and the Local Government Association to put ideas forward about how they are going to do redistribution to those areas, with the current timeframes, can you explain how that works? We have had a few councillors ask that question and express their confusion on the matter.

**Ms Carrigan:** If I may clarify, are you talking about boundary requirements?

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** Yes, boundary redistribution, realignments for divisions and wards.

**Ms Carrigan:** I will need to take that on notice because it is quite complex. With respect to the timeframes around how long it takes, do you mean for the process for—

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** How long it takes, what process is proposed? There have been a fair few comments by councillors trying to ascertain how this new process will work.

**Ms Carrigan:** I understand. Broadly speaking, the amendments proposed streamline the process. Currently, councils are required to apply to the minister. The minister then refers the matter to the ECQ. This just allows the councils to go directly to the ECQ which will provide a recommendation to the minister for a decision. It speeds up the process.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** When tabling this bill now, how does that work with the time frame as it is set in the actual legislation?

**Mr Holden:** The bill includes a couple of amendments about the timing. It basically brings it in line with what is currently in place for the City of Brisbane. The deadline currently is the October in the year preceding the quadrennial election. The bill makes it the March two years out which will then provide a lot more time for everybody to have the consultation, have the information, do the reviews and make the recommendations. The bill just makes changes to the timeframes.

**Mr POWER:** The bill makes a change where it shortens reporting periods for certain interests and removes the concept of the relevant term. How does this change enhance transparency as opposed to diminish it? Is there any way it enhances transparency?

**Mr Holden:** The policy intent is to recognise that the focus should be on the current term of that member. The changes are that the register of interest for most of interest that you are declaring is for the current term you are serving. There are some other provisions that are in the extract. This is an extract on the webpage where it is only the financial year—this is around gifts and hospitality—which brings it into line with the provisions that apply to state members.

**Mr POWER:** On that, if a member was to receive gifts, donations and sponsored travel in the lead-up to an election or in the three months after the election but before the end of the financial year, that would be the limit of their declaration? Then the department does not see a transparency issue with the cumulative effects of repeat benefits across multiple years not being visible to the public?

**Mr Holden:** I will talk to the provisions. I cannot comment on the policy rationale or benefits. Basically, if you registered an interest earlier in the year and you are a councillor, it would still be available, so you would have a register.

**Mr POWER:** In that financial year?

**Mr Holden:** Yes, in that financial year. Other interests would be for the full current term. It is important to make clear that it is just those gifts—hospitality, travel, accommodation—for the financial year, and that is only in the extract. The actual full register would have it for the current term. It is only the extract where we are talking about the financial year.

**Mr POWER:** But the councillor or mayor involved, once that financial year has passed, could, for instance, engage others about the project of someone for whom they have been given gifts, donations or sponsored travel? Previously, they were not allowed for the relevant term.

**Mr Holden:** That would be registerable for the current term, in the full register. When we use the term 'financial year' it is only for that extract that is available on the website.

**Mr POWER:** I understand that there is perhaps a want to reduce red tape for councillors, but this actually reduces transparency. It already has been made a declaration, so it is not reducing any of the impost on the council, is it?

**Mr Holden:** I can only talk to what the—

**Mr POWER:** We are just trying to hide things from the public, really, through this provision.

**CHAIR:** Member for Logan, we cannot—

**Mr POWER:** The minister is trying to hide things from the public with this provision.

**Mr BAILLIE:** Point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** I will take the point of order, please.

**Mr BAILLIE:** Imputations.

**CHAIR:** Yes. Member for Logan, we cannot say things like that to the officers of the department. As I said at the commencement of the proceedings—

**Mr POWER:** My deepest apologies, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. We are here to get the facts from them and not to put their heads in a vice. I ask, please, about some evidence which was given earlier today by the Mayor of Ipswich City Council—I believe you might have seen it—where she talked about an experience where it became far from certain that she was empowered to speak on behalf of the council that she chaired, and that the threat of that also extended to her ability to function as the chair of the local disaster management committee. Are the changes to the bill which are aimed at addressing that and clarifying the position of the mayor something which has emerged from other sources? I gather Councillor Harding was not the only local government identity that might have made representations to you or voiced criticisms of the way things currently are?

**Ms Carrigan:** Yes, that is correct. There were a number of councils where it was unclear. There has been a longstanding policy intent that the mayor is the official spokesperson for council, the mayor is the chair of ordinary meetings, and the mayor is the chair of the local disaster management group. So, leaving aside the amendments that were made to the Disaster Management Regulation, which is another portfolio's responsibility, the purpose of these provisions is to make it very clear, put it beyond doubt, so that the community is very clear and councillors are very clear that the official spokesperson is the mayor. You are correct, this was not an isolated incident; it became clear that it was a wider spread concern.

**CHAIR:** But at the same time, I gather, the intent is not to at the same time throw the baby out with the bath water and inhibit the ability of councils to speak on matters of public importance, encumbered by the possibility that the council will sanction them for speaking out or not identifying explicitly that it is their opinion.

**Ms Carrigan:** Yes, that is absolutely correct. Councillors have always had an obligation to inform community and to engage with community. That requirement has also been amended in section 12 of the act through these amendments to make it clear that this does not limit the ability of councillors to engage with their communities about topics of interest to their community; it means that the heading of the statement will not be 'official spokesperson'.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. That concludes today's hearing. I thank everybody who has appeared today for their participation. To our Hansard reporter, Brooke, thank you for being here and lightening the world for us all. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. There was one question taken on notice concerning the number of amendments. Can I propose that the department respond to the committee by 5pm on Tuesday, 20 January? Will that be sufficient time for you?

**Ms Carrigan:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much.

**The committee adjourned at 1.16 pm.**