

Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

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TO: Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee

*RE: Alignment with the Crime and Corruption Commission Queensland's Investigation
Murray Report Findings*

I appreciate the opportunity to provide a submission on the Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025.

I support genuine integrity reform in local government. However, I do not support the Bill in its current form as it fails to implement the core recommendations arising from the Crime and Corruption Commission's Investigation Murray - a report that has direct and immediate relevance to Townsville and Queensland local government more broadly.

Townsville recently experienced a gross failure of governance involving materially false biographical claims, informal advisers, encrypted communication channels, and strategically timed resignation, limiting accountability. The CCC's Murray Report identifies and outlines these systemic vulnerabilities, and prompted a response from Premier David Crisafulli, who committed publicly to closing these "loopholes" and preventing candidates from masquerading as something they are not (Townsville Bulletin, 29 November 2025).

Despite this, the public briefing of the Bill on 10 December made no mention of the CCC report, nor its recommendations. Most alarmingly, there were no questions or input from Member for Townsville Adam Baillie MP – who is a member of the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee – on how this Bill can leverage the findings of the Murray report to prevent another local government corruption scenario from occurring in Queensland. This is an integrity risk, a missed opportunity, and a public breach of the spirit of the Premier's own commitments.

To safeguard all Queensland local governments from facing a similar fallout as those Townsville has just lived through as an outcome of the 2024 council election, key reforms are required to close the integrity gaps outlined in the Murray report.

With this in mind, the Bill must be amended to account for the following:

1. Evidence of material biography at candidate nomination:

The Bill must require candidates to formally declare and verify any material biographical claims, including but not limited to tertiary qualification, military service history or aspects of lived experience (for example, if the candidate chooses to disclose a serious medical diagnosis as part of their campaign platform), with sanctions for false declarations.

2. Clarify that s 182 applies to candidates who misrepresent themselves:

Amend s 182 to explicitly capture self-referential false statements and toll statutory timeframes during CCC assessment.

3. Regulation of informal advisers

The Bill must prohibit or regulate non-appointed advisers and off-books governance structures, and prohibit the handling of confidential information by unappointed individuals.

4. Record-keeping obligations for digital communications:

The Bill must mandate that all council-related communications are captured in official records as promptly as reasonably practicable, regardless of the original communication platform.

5. Integrity Processes continue post-separation:

A statutory mechanism for post-separation accountability must be added to the Bill to allow for integrity findings and disciplinary declarations to be actioned, even after resignation.

The Murray report provides a clear blueprint for comprehensive local government safeguarding and reform. This Bill fails to implement it. Amendments are required to ensure the legislation reflects lessons learned from Townsville's dark period of leadership incompetence and to restore public trust.

Kind regards,

NATELLE JANE ARCHER

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