




Speech By
Hon. Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

**PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND MISCONDUCT COMMITTEE: REPORT, MOTION
TO TAKE NOTE**

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (11.37 am): I am speaking today to report No. 89 of the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee as the original complainant of this matter. I note that a few days prior to the March 2012 election I put in a detailed complaint against one Ms Kathryn Ellis from the CMC who at the time, as I still understand, was married to Mr Nolan, who was a business partner of Bruce Hawker, the Labor Party strategist running the 2012 campaign. There was a photograph released I think in the *Courier Mail* at the time that showed Mr Nolan and Mr Hawker having coffee in one of the shops in Brisbane during the election campaign. That is why I made the complaint.

Upon coming to realise that Ms Ellis was indeed married to Mr Nolan—the business partner of Bruce Hawker, Labor Party strategist—and working in the CMC I became very, very much concerned, because the subject matter of the complaint, that being the candidate for Ashgrove at the time, had an enormous amount of complaints from the Labor Party at the time. Even on page 4 of the PCMC report it states—

The Chairperson of the CMC advised that Ms Ellis had a minor role in the investigation relating to Mr Newman.

So we had in a minor role in the investigation of Mr Newman the wife of a business partner of a Labor Party strategist. I think all Queenslanders should be concerned. That should raise the eyebrows of anyone reading a report about someone who is in the crime-fighting corruption watchdog in Queensland having such a direct involvement by their spouse with the Labor Party in Queensland. So I put in this complaint and it has taken nearly 12 months to get a resolution.

As the original complainant, I want to place a couple things on the record today. I will deal with the Labor Party campaign and the use of the CMC in a minute. This was a clear attempt by the Labor Party to politicise the CMC during the election campaign. The member for Nicklin says that I should have confidence in the top corruption and crime-fighting body in this state, and I do. Queenslanders want confidence in the top corruption and crime-fighting body in this state, but this is the sort of thing that puts questions in people's minds as to that confidence.


How far will the Labor Party corrupt the truth in this state? We know the member for South Brisbane was heavily involved in the 2012 state campaign. She served on this committee for some period, as I understand. She was directly involved in Labor Party strategies. She was probably having daily meetings with Mr Hawker. All the while the candidate for Ashgrove at the time was being investigated by the CMC with the minor involvement of Ms Ellis.

There are a couple of things that I want to put on the record: firstly, this report took far too long; secondly, why is it that the CMC investigate potential corruption issues within the CMC? I referred this to the PCMC and by rights they put it onto the CMC commissioner. They have an oversight position, but the CMC ultimately did the investigation, came to some negative conclusions, was going to

terminate Ms Ellis's appointment and then Ms Ellis got sick so it did not terminate her employment. She resigned at the end of last year. As a complainant I am left wondering where is justice in this matter? Someone just resigns from the CMC and that is the end of the matter. If I can offer anything to the PCMC, particularly to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly, it is that I had complete frustration. The committee tabled one letter that I wrote which was the original complaint. I wrote numerous letters to the committee which I, under standing orders, cannot table in this parliament today. Even as the complainant, even though we are debating this report, I still cannot table all the documentation associated with this issue.

I call on the CLA to seriously look at the relationship between the CMC and the PCMC. Members of parliament who are the subject of complaints should be able to talk to other members of parliament. Although the honourable the Premier was the candidate at the time and I put in the complaint about the CMC where he was the subject of the complaint, I could not talk to the Premier about this until today when we are debating this report. I think the CLA should seriously look at the freedom of members of parliament to talk to one another about these matters and not have one member of parliament with the burden on their shoulders. The timeline should seriously be looked at and the CMC should not be investigating misconduct matters involving itself. The other issue is that all the letters that I tabled should be put out into the public domain so people can understand the complete frustration that I have had over the last 12 months.


Madam SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (11.42 am): I move—

That the Attorney-General be granted an extension of time.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE:** I thank the honourable Manager of Government Business. I do have concerns with the secretive nature of the PCMC and the CMC. This issue should be of concern to everyone who reads this report. It is no reflection on the great work that Mrs Cunningham, the member for Gladstone, is doing as the independent chair of the PCMC. As a complainant who has gone through this process over the last 12 months I think we are at a stage where we need further reform.

I believe that the PCMC should have open meetings like other committees have open meetings. I believe Queenslanders expect nothing less from an open and accountable committee system. I am not sure whether the PCMC or indeed the Ethics Committee have had any open meetings in the last two years to talk about these sorts of issues. I believe Queenslanders expect nothing less than total independence, openness and accountability. That is not to say that in this process the committee has not been, but Queenslanders do not understand that process because all they have is a frustrated member of parliament as the original complainant, a report that took 12 months to investigate and things like the chairman of the CMC advising that Ms Ellis had a minor role in the investigation. I acknowledge the issues raised by the member for Gaven. He stepped aside from the committee because of his brother. He is of great legal mind and well qualified to address that issue, but was put in the position, essentially by the CMC, where there was a perception of bias. I understand that issue completely.

The other issue is that this whole process took nearly 12 months. From the record of the PCMC the CMC was going to take action against Ms Ellis in terms of terminating her employment, but then she resigned and no further action was taken and the CMC washed its hands clean of any of this issue despite the fact there had been some adverse findings. With all due respect, the recommendation that has been given for me to adopt with respect to the Anti-Discrimination Act really has nothing to do with the issue at hand. The issue at hand was a serious complaint I had against a senior member of the CMC who investigated Mr Newman during the election campaign to a minor extent, and then the public are asked to believe that there was no issue because she did not have a direct involvement in the outcome of the investigation of Mr Newman, yet the person was allowed to resign from the position and no further action is taken.

I again call on the Committee of the Legislative Assembly to look at how we can open these processes for the benefit of all members. I can tell members in this House the frustration and the burden I have had placed on my shoulders for 12 months since I put this complaint in. I have not been able to speak to any of my parliamentary colleagues about this issue to seek advice. I have not been able to speak to anyone publicly about it. I cannot go into the details today because I would be referred to the Ethics Committee if I breached standing orders, which is a ridiculous issue in itself. We

are debating a report, we are debating an issue that went to the PCMC and I cannot report on letters that I wrote to the committee in this process as the original complainant. I cannot table all the documentation so Queenslanders can have a full understanding of this issue and where I came from because I could be referred to the Ethics Committee for breaching standing orders against the privileges of the committee. All I can do is speak about what is reported.

This should be a modern Queensland where we talk about open and accountable government. We have had the Premier today releasing diaries; we have had guidelines issued by myself a couple of weeks ago where we have the most open and transparent RTI processes—where applications of RTI are made available—yet we still in this modern parliament have a closed door operation with parliamentary crime and misconduct matters and ethics matters in this state. For the sake of all members of parliament, I call on the Committee of the Legislative Assembly to seriously consider reforms to the PCMC and the CMC so that the public can again regain that trust in the body that has the highest powers with respect to misconduct and corruption matters in this state.

I know at times I have been at loggerheads with the Independent member for Nicklin with respect to the CMC. I genuinely say to the member for Nicklin today that the whole point of Ian Callinan's inquiry into the CMC is to make sure that at the end of the day we have a system that is more open and transparent.

Mrs Miller: It is to get rid of the CMC.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Bundamba: so I can get rid of the CMC. That is the sort of ridiculous statement from the Labor Party that led to this report in the first place. That is the hide of the Labor Party. The Labor Party should hang its head in shame for using the CMC as its political football. Any issue the Labor Party had its members would run down and do a press conference, particularly Andrew Fraser or Anna Bligh. They would turn up to the press conference and say, 'We are referring Campbell Newman' or 'Jarrod Bleijie' or someone 'to the CMC.' They would be asked, 'What is your evidence?' And they would answer, 'Well, we don't really have any evidence, but if they investigate surely they will come up with something.' The corruption watchdog should not be used in that manner. It is up to the Labor Party—not the CMC or members of parliament or the PCMC—to stop that rot, to stamp out that rot. The member for Bundamba can sit here opposite interjecting and shaking her head because she accepts what the Labor Party did. She accepts the absolute rot and garbage that the Labor Party put the Premier through as the candidate for Ashgrove and other members in this place and, more particularly, his family who ought not to have gone through that whole situation. It was all because the Labor Party wanted a quick win in an election.

But was it not a change of story the Friday one week before the election when the CMC chair came out and said there are no issues here, nothing further to investigate, no case to answer? Then the Labor Party's little campaign, led by the member for South Brisbane who was in the strategy box at the office probably leading this whole campaign against the Premier, came crashing down. The next day the Labor Party went flat because Anna Bligh, the Premier at the time, had no answer to the question, 'What evidence do you have?'

Mr Choat: She is very quiet now.

Mr BLEIJIE: I know; I take the interjection. The member for South Brisbane is very quiet. She has not said that she was not the Labor Party strategist involved with Bruce Hawker and all the rot to the CMC at that time. In Queensland we want a crime-fighting corruption body that is open, transparent and accountable, just as Queenslanders should expect. Queenslanders should expect nothing less. Queenslanders want an open and integral system of corruption fighting in this state. They want a body that is open and accountable itself. Who watches the watchers? That is why it is up to this place to ensure that we have a more open and transparent system.

As I said, the Labor Party should hang its head in shame. The member for Bundamba, who is all squawk and talk now, should hang her head in shame for its desperate efforts to win an election. This would not have happened if the Labor Party had not tried to misrepresent the facts to win a few votes. The member for Bundamba is to be condemned for being a part of it. The member for Mulgrave is condemned for being a part of it. The member for South Brisbane is certainly condemned for being a part of it, because the member for South Brisbane was at the heart of this.

We will fix this. We will ensure that the CMC is an open and transparent crime-fighting corruption body in this state. I look forward to Ian Callinan's report being handed down next week or a little later, depending on whether they want to investigate matters that have arisen of late. The member for Bundamba—

Mrs Miller interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I will not hang my head in shame. Neither I nor the Liberal National Party used the CMC as a political football. The Labor Party brought this on itself. It was not the Liberal National Party or the then candidate for Ashgrove; it was the Labor Party. All seven squawkers opposite, who are now shaking their heads, should hang their heads in shame. Over years and years they developed this process of using the CMC as a political football. The time has come to draw a line in the sand. The CMC will be an open and accountable body to the people of Queensland, not the Labor Party and not the member for Bundamba.

I still express my strong dissatisfaction with the result of the CMC investigation into one Ms Kathryn Ellis. Ms Kathryn Ellis resigned from the CMC and no further action has been taken with respect to that individual. There was an adverse finding. The CMC said it would terminate her employment without any reference to why. The people of Queensland ought to know why. We should have the strongest possible safeguards in the CMC to ensure that strong people associated with any political party ought not be in those positions.