



Speech By
Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

**FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE: REPORT, MOTION TO TAKE
NOTE**

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (11.09 am): I move—

That the House take note of report No. 26 of the Finance and Administration Committee, titled *Oversight of the Queensland Integrity Commissioner 2012 and Review of Lobbyists Code of Conduct*, tabled on 27 March 2013.

Firstly, my thanks go to the Finance and Administration Committee secretariat—Ms Deborah Jeffrey, Dr Maggie Lilith, Mrs Marilyn Freeman and Ms Lynette Whelan—and all members, both past and present, of the Finance and Administration Committee. The committee has oversight responsibilities with respect to the Integrity Commissioner and his office under the Integrity Act. The Integrity Commissioner is also required to consult with the committee regarding the Lobbyists Code of Conduct. The purpose of report No. 26 is to inform the parliament regarding these responsibilities.

The Integrity Commissioner has made a number of changes to the Lobbyists Code of Conduct subsequent to the passage of the Right to Information and Integrity (Openness and Transparency) Amendment Bill 2012 through the parliament. The Integrity Commissioner has included additional provisions relating to the publication of the information provided to him. The committee disagreed with some aspects of the proposal and sought his reconsideration of these issues.

The committee is also concerned that the definition of 'lobbyist' is too narrowly focused and does not include up to 80 per cent of those who lobby government. The committee considers that the definition of who is a lobbyist needs to be expanded to incorporate paid in-house lobbyists of both corporations and associations, including industry and non-profit organisations.

The committee found that there are a number of additional areas that require review in order to ensure that the act is best practice. The committee has recommended that a review of the act be completed. I thank the Integrity Commissioner and his office for their assistance. I also thank those who provided submissions to the Integrity Commissioner regarding the review.

As stated earlier, the committee recommends that the Integrity Commissioner reconsider his proposal to publish the client names and the purpose of the meetings, as part of the review of the Lobbyists Code of Conduct. The committee is of the view that either the client names or the purpose of the meeting be published, but not both. Sadly it appears that the Integrity Commissioner has chosen to ignore the committee's recommendations. I fear that, as a result, there will be unintended consequences. I fear that this important industry will suffer significantly as a result of the Integrity Commissioner's decision.

Section 68 of the act stipulates that the Integrity Commissioner may, after consultation with the parliamentary committee, approve a Lobbyists Code of Conduct which must be published on the Integrity Commissioner's website. Lobbyists are required to comply with the code. The purpose of the Lobbyists Code of Conduct is to provide standards of conduct for lobbyists designed to ensure that

contact between lobbyists and government representatives and opposition representatives is carried out in accordance with public expectations of transparency and integrity.

In mid-December 2012, the Integrity Commissioner outlined in his letter to registered lobbyists the amendments he proposed to make at that time to the Lobbyists Code of Conduct. The Integrity Commissioner proposed to seek a great deal of information from lobbyists—indeed the proposal was quite over the top. As a result of feedback, the Integrity Commissioner now requires the information that is to be provided for each lobbying contact as follows: the name of the registered lobbyist; whether in arranging the contact the lobbyist complied with requirements of 3.2 of the Lobbyists Code of Conduct and, if relevant, 3.3; the date of the lobbying contact; the client of the lobbyist; the title and/or name of the government or opposition representative present; and the purpose of the contact. As committee chair, I am disappointed in this decision by the Integrity Commissioner and hope that between now and 1 May he chooses to follow the committee's recommendation—that is, to either publish the client's name or the purpose of the contact, but not both.

A further two recommendations made by the committee are as follows: firstly, the committee recommends that the Integrity Act be amended to include paid in-house lobbyists of both corporations and associations. This may go some way to offset the draconian decision made by the Integrity Commissioner. The committee also recommends that a review of the Integrity Act 2009 be completed and include examination of a number of other topics as outlined in the report.

We have a long way to go before what I regard as a level playing field is in place when it comes to the lobbying industry, an important industry that essentially has a role to assist business to inform government of the views of the marketplace. To single out third party lobbyists or lobbying firms who represent around 20 per cent of the market is both unjust and a detriment in that it is likely to cause some to go underground with regard to the way they conduct their activities. It will open things up to trawling and most certainly disadvantage business enterprises that cannot afford in-house lobbyists. I commend the report to the House.

(Time expired)