




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Record of Proceedings, 2 November 2016

MOTION

CFMEU, WorkCover Queensland

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (6.05 pm): I rise to oppose this motion in all of its forms. The member for Kawana is never short of a conspiracy theory. He is always baking up ideas, making accusations and can never debate a proper issue in this House without stooping to personal attacks, which is exactly what he is doing in this House right now and it is disgrace. The member for Kawana has asked a question about whether anything like this was discussed with the CFMEU. Let me say to him categorically on the record here in this House that at no stage was a CEO of WorkCover discussed at that meeting with the CFMEU. I repeat: absolutely at no stage.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms GRACE: It is interesting because those opposite ask me in this House, 'Have you spoken to the union? Have you told them that they are doing the wrong thing? Are you meeting with them?' Here they are out of control, so you are damned if you meet with them and damned if you do not. If I do not meet with them, I am not doing anything and if I do meet with them, they say, 'You're disclosing all of this information.' Can I say on the record that was a total, absolute coincidence. There is no conspiracy theory as thought up in the head of the member for Kawana.

Let's go through this appointment because the WorkCover CEO is a significant appointment and an important appointment in this state. It is a significant appointment. I do not intend today to breach cabinet confidentiality. As a former minister, the member opposite should know the processes. I am concerned that before this matter has gone to cabinet and a decision has been made and signed off by the Governor in Council, this has been leaked and the media have been informed. That is a situation of its own.

Mr Bleijie: By your office.

Ms GRACE: I will take that interjection and I will totally reject that my office leaked this or informed the media in relation to this CEO. Let us go through the process. The process was managed by an external executive recruitment company Davidson. The selection committee comprised the chair, Glenn Ferguson. Let us look at the issue of Glenn Ferguson. He and I have actually worked quite well together in a professional manner. Glenn Ferguson was not appointed by us, the Labor Party; Glenn Ferguson, who is a member of the LNP and holds several committee and policy positions of the LNP, a Sunshine Coast solicitor known very well to the member for Kawana, was appointed by the member for Kawana. If the member for Kawana has lost confidence in the chair that he appointed himself, I suggest that he look at himself again. This board was headed by the chair, Glenn Ferguson, and included Under Treasurer Jim Murphy and board member Flavia Gobbo. I was contacted by the chair in early

September and advised that, after an extensive round of interviews, the short list was down to two. At the request of the board, the recruitment company arranged for both candidates to meet me on 21 September. Following this meeting I had a discussion with the chair and we agreed that one candidate was clearly superior to the other. I am told that the candidate was invited—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, one moment. Pause the clock. There is too much debate across the chamber.

Ms GRACE: I am told that the candidate of choice was invited—and I am not going to name who it is—to attend a meeting of the full board, appointed by the member for Kawana, on 18 October. Immediately following that meeting the chair wrote to me—

Mr SPEAKER: One moment, Minister. Pause the clock. Member for Kawana, you are warned under standing order 253A. If you persist I will take the appropriate action.

Ms GRACE:—advising that the board appointed by the member for Kawana—the total board—had unanimously agreed to recommend the candidate that I will be taking to cabinet to be endorsed by the Governor in Council. If the member for Kawana has lost faith in his own board appointments then that is his problem: not mine. This process was open and transparent, but he knows nothing about that because if you look at his appointments—like the Chief Justice in this state—what a disgrace that was. You talk about leaking conversations, you talk about doing something that was completely outside of the moral and professional way that it should have been done—

Mr BLEIJIE: I rise on two points of order: firstly, there is a Westminster convention that you do not reflect on a judicial officer. Justice Carmody is an existing judicial officer of the Supreme Court of Queensland. That is my first point of order. My second point of order is that I take complete offence at what the minister said and I ask her to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, will you withdraw?

Ms GRACE: I withdraw. I was referring to the appointment process—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I would urge you not to provoke the opposition and the member for Kawana and to stick to the matter that the motion is about. Time has expired.

(Time expired)