



Speech By  
**Jarrold Bleijie**


**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

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Record of Proceedings, 24 May 2016

**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Ministerial Indemnity**

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (10.17 am): The ability of current and future ministers of the Crown to carry out duties that they have sworn to do relies on their ability to conduct their offices in the public interest consistent with how they view the public interest. Just as Supreme Court judges and members of the judiciary benefit from a statutory protection of acts done in the course of their official roles, so too do members of the ministry have an indemnity for acts done in the course of their official roles.

The indemnity is very important. It permits the minister of the Crown to participate fully in the activities of the executive government. Ministers need to be able to publicly comment upon matters that are brought to their attention. Otherwise, their accountability to parliament and the media breaks down. The 24-hour news cycle is long gone. Nowadays, we live in a minute-by-minute reporting regime and ministers are asked to comment on a variety of matters all hours of the day.

Much of what a minister of the Crown does is done outside this august chamber and its committees. A minister must be able to have conversations, speak to officials and speak to the media as part of the exercise of ministerial responsibility. The present and future ministers of the ministry need to know that they will have the necessary safeguards to protect their conduct and carry out their official duties. Current and future ministers need to know that the state of Queensland properly indemnifies them for their official role. Indemnification of the ministers of the Crown is nothing new. It has been around for a long time and has been used by Labor and non-Labor governments in the past.

The guidelines for legal assistance and indemnity provide that the state will pay the legal fees of a minister or former minister if the impugned action is taken against them whilst they were carrying out their duties as a minister. It also covers the costs of any settlement amount agreed to by the parties, which I note is approved by the government of the day at the time of settlement.

Most settlement agreements contain confidentiality agreements, binding the parties not to disclose information that occurred at the mediation or the actual settlement terms. When the indemnity provisions are activated, the approval of the exercise of that policy is made by the Attorney-General and/or the Premier of the day and is reported to the members of the cabinet of the day.

It is easy for someone not armed with the current correct facts to suggest that former ministers should pay back the money, particularly if matters before the court are ultimately settled by the parties. For a former minister to correct the record or publicise the facts would put them in breach of their own settlement agreement. The unauthorised disclosure of confidential agreements that are designed to protect the integrity of the executive government and its principal officers should be of concern to all Queenslanders. The release of this government-held information jeopardises the ability of present and future ministers from carrying out their role and not properly advancing the public interest as they see from time to time.

The Premier has recently publicly commented on a matter that I was involved in. Her comments stem from a report that was published in the *Guardian* on 16 May 2016. So important is this issue to the integrity of the machinery of government that I wrote to the CCC about this matter. My complaint concerns the possible breach of confidentiality that I allege has occurred in either the Premier's office or the Attorney-General's office. I have now had it confirmed to me by the CCC that they have completed their assessment and have now launched a full investigation into this matter. I table a copy for the benefit of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 23 May 2016, from the Director, Integrity Services, Crime and Corruption Commission, Ms Kylee Rumble, to the member for Kawana, Mr Jarrod Bleijie MP, regarding concerns about alleged leaking of information to the media [748].