




Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2016

MOTION

Citizen's Right of Reply

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (3.02 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

- That this House notes report No. 163 of the Ethics Committee and the recommendation of the committee that a right of reply be incorporated into the *Record of Proceedings*; and
- That the House adopt the committee's recommendation and incorporate the right of reply into the *Record of Proceedings*.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

RESPONSE BY AUSCRIPT TO A STATEMENT MADE BY THE MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE ON 25 NOVEMBER 2015

On 25 November 2014, the Member for Redcliffe made the following statement in the Queensland Parliament:

Another great debacle overseen by this Attorney-General has been the outsourcing of the court transcription services. The cost to consumers has almost doubled. The cost for a day's transcript in the 2013-14 financial year under the State Reporting Bureau was \$1,267.90. In the same financial year the average cost of a day's transcript under Auscript was \$2, 189.88. That is a massive increase of 73 per cent.

Not only was the cost to customers massively increased; the cost to government departments saw even greater rises. Under an RTI obtained by the opposition last week, the department wrote that the outsourcing of the recording and transcription services was anticipated to give rise to \$6 million in savings for the department. Instead, additional costs were experienced by the Magistrates Court and QCAT. During the implementation process it was anticipated that these would be \$2 million for the Magistrates Court and \$170,000 for QCAT. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General was directed to find the \$2 million in savings internally, but no steps were taken to do so.

The QCAT costs increased from the previously budgeted amount of \$60,000 for transcription services to a total cost of \$600,000 for recording and transcription. One of the key cost-saving initiatives that was highlighted in the Auscript implementation was the ability for the judiciary and court staff to access the recordings online through court FM. That, however, according to the department, is proving impractical.

The outsourcing did not go as planned. One of the staff took a phone call from the Attorney-General who was calling to ask how the outsourcer was going in May 2013. It only started in March. Apparently that call was sparked by a conversation with the OPP. The view from the Office of the OPP was that they were not too impressed by the Auscript service and were not inclined to send much more work their way until they sorted themselves out.

Back at the 2012 estimates hearing, when asked about the time frames for the provision of transcripts in criminal trials under the outsourced model, the Attorney-General said-

The government will put a time frame on it. We would expect that we would do it more efficient and more reliable and faster than is currently the case offered by the State Reporting Bureau.

This has not been the case, however. There are significant delays. The Court of Appeal has particularly been affected. There are constant references to the delayed transcript issue.

The Court of Appeal in particular had to ask for specific turnaround times, which could not be provided because of Auscript delays. A meeting was held in August last year because 27 Court of Appeal matters were experiencing delays. The Attorney-General is the worst manager of government procurement processes in this parliament and all so he can give millions of dollars of government contracts to LNP donors.

Auscript Australasia Pty Limited (Auscript) refutes the assertion by the Member for Redcliffe on 25 November 2014 that the outsourcing of recording and transcription services for Queensland Courts to Auscript has been a debacle, that costs to consumers and government departments have increased significantly and that there have been significant delays in the production of transcripts. Auscript contends that on any measure—accuracy, speed and cost to taxpayers—the move to an outsourced recording and transcription service in Queensland has been an outstanding success.

Auscript also contends that any initial delays were overcome quickly through working closely with the court and its stakeholders, and there were no issues caused by Auscript that delayed proceedings or listings. Auscript notes that this arrangement has resulted in an external quality assurance framework and auditing processes being introduced with the Department for the first time. Auscript also notes that the processes that Auscript utilise for the Queensland Courts are regularly audited by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and Auscript is also internationally quality certified to ISO9001.

Similarly, Auscript refutes the claim that accessing recordings of proceedings online through the Court.fm portal is proving impractical. Auscript contends that as at 25 November 2014, there were more than 400 licences in use by the Department and Court.fm is used daily by the Judiciary, Associates and Court staff.

Auscript also refutes the imputation that Auscript is the beneficiary of an improper procurement process. Auscript assures the House that it was awarded the contract by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General following an open, competitive tender process and after a comprehensive due diligence process was completed.