




Speech By
Verity Barton

MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2016

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (3.23 pm): I pass on my apologies to the member for Bulimba. I had anticipated the current chair of the committee jumping. I did not intend to try to supersede the member for Bulimba.

I rise as a former member of the Finance and Administration Committee to speak to the report that we tabled with respect to the strategic review of the functions of the Queensland Integrity Commissioner. At the outset, can I acknowledge the former chair of the committee, the member for Bulimba, Di Farmer, for the work that she did as the chair of the committee. This is the first opportunity I have had to publicly acknowledge that. I am sure that everyone who was at the time a member of the committee would agree that, whilst we did not necessarily always end up on the same page, in terms of the way we worked as a committee it was very much a collaborative thing. I am sure that the member for Bulimba and I will both miss our time on the Finance and Administration Committee.

One of the things that we did get to do was look at the strategic review of the functions of the Integrity Commissioner. To that end, I think it would be very appropriate on behalf of the opposition to acknowledge the work that Professor Peter Coaldrake from the Queensland University of Technology did in conducting the strategic review and, of course, thank him for the guidance and the information that he provided to our committee as we were considering his review. Of course, we also acknowledge Richard Bingham, who is the Queensland Integrity Commissioner. Richard also made a lot of time and effort for the committee when we were going through and considering the recommendations that had been made by Professor Coaldrake.

I think it is fair to say that, when we were considering whether or not we would accept certain recommendations of Professor Coaldrake, there were just a couple that probably went a bit too far in terms of the efficacy of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner and how we maintain an appropriate regime around the Register of Lobbyists. Without Professor Coaldrake having full knowledge of how the function operated, he perhaps did not understand the implications of some of his recommendations.

The really big thing that we as a committee had to address was the extent to which we would broaden or narrow the definition of 'lobbyist'. One of the things that Professor Coaldrake had recommended was that we broaden the definition of 'lobbyist' to take into account advocacy organisations and whether they would have to appear on the lobbyists register. Certainly, there was very persuasive evidence provided by organisations like the Queensland Property Council, the Chamber of Commerce and other organisations about whether that was going to be an effective use of the lobbyists register and whether that would perhaps be an appropriate understanding of the work that they do. I think that would be the best way to put it. As we all know, whether they are business groups, industry groups or even unions, there is a role to play in terms of advocacy, and it is a very important

role to play. It would come as no surprise to anyone, particularly with the CCIQ for example, that they would advocate with respect to payroll tax and the cost of doing business. I do not think the committee ever really at any time considered it appropriate that we expand the definition of 'lobbyist' with respect to what would be on the lobbyists register to capture organisations like CCIQ or the Property Council.

One of the other things that I think we probably did consider to an extent but did not necessarily make any findings on was the recommendation with respect to advocacy groups. It gave us an opportunity to have a broader discussion about just how interventionist we should be, whether it is the role of government, whether it is the role of the person who is lobbying and the like.

I also want to take this opportunity to note that there has certainly been a very bipartisan view over the past few years. When it comes to these kinds of things everyone has worked together. One of the things that the Newman government did that was quite significant was the publication of ministerial diaries. Everyone would agree that, when it comes to people lobbying government to make decisions that have an impact on their personal circumstances, it is important that we have an understanding of who is lobbying and who is advocating. I am sure that everyone would agree that the publication of ministerial diaries was a significant and positive step and perhaps we can consider moving forward with what we should do.