




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 28 February 2017

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Electoral Boundary Redistribution

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (10.03 am): The Queensland Redistribution Commission proposal for the redistribution of the state's electorate districts was to be gazetted on Friday, 24 February 2017 and published in advertisements in 45 newspapers around Queensland from Saturday, 25 February. The commission also had planned a media conference after the official gazettement of the report on Friday morning. On Thursday afternoon, the Queensland Redistribution Commission was alerted to an unauthorised release of the advertising material by a media outlet, the North West Star. The QRC advised that they sought to have the material withdrawn from the North West Star's website. That request was denied. My office was subsequently advised by the QRC of the breach. To avoid further confusion to elected members and the broader community, at 5.30 pm the QRC released online the full proposal for the redistribution.

This was an extraordinary leak that no doubt caused much distress among sitting members, particularly those contacted by the media for response. On Friday morning, I directed the Electoral Commissioner to provide a report by the end of the day on the circumstances surrounding the incident. I was subsequently advised that the breach arose from the Queensland Redistribution Commission placing print advertisements with local newspapers' advertising teams in advance, on a strictly confidential basis. The advertisements included maps and the new proposed boundaries and names, as required by section 48 of the Electoral Act 1992. On Friday, the QRC announced that they would be pursuing the source of the leak. The ECQ advises me that the editor of the paper that first published the leaked information, the North West Star, breached both the Fairfax Code of Conduct and the specific confidentiality agreement with the advertisers. The news item was subsequently removed when these breaches were pointed out.

I am advised that the QRC is now seeking legal advice about what actions to take as a result of the breach. The QRC will inform me of what further action may be taken in response to this breach. In addition, I will be requesting the ECQ to provide any submissions about what action can be taken in the future to avoid this occurring, including any changes to procedures for advertising and the method of advertising required under the Electoral Act.

The parliament and the public must have faith in our electoral system and the function of the Electoral Commission of Queensland, including the Queensland Redistribution Commission. This incident damages that confidence and it is important that the matter be fully investigated and that the public be informed of what action is taken as a consequence of the investigation. In the meantime, I remind all members and the public that objections and comments on the proposed electoral boundaries are open until 5 pm, 27 March.