



Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2017

MOTION: ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUM REVIEW, INDEPENDENT PANEL REPORT

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (9.37 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, in accordance with standing order 33(2), the House order the report to be published.

Sound electoral processes are vital to our democracy. It is important that Queenslanders have confidence in those processes and that any concerns are rigorously investigated. That is why last year the Palaszczuk government launched an independent review of the referendum on four-year terms and local government elections in March 2016 and the Toowoomba South by-election in July 2016. I take this opportunity to thank the review panel members, Jim Soorley, Wayne Kratzmann and Pam Parker, for their thorough investigation. This morning I have tabled the panel report. In addition, I table the Electoral Commission of Queensland's response and also the government's response to the report.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 10 May 2017, from Electoral Commissioner, Mr Walter van der Merwe, to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Training and Skills, Hon. Yvette D'Ath, regarding response to the Inquiry report [\[985\]](#).

Tabled paper: Inquiry report—A review of the conduct of the 2016 local government elections, the referendum and the Toowoomba South by-election, government response [\[986\]](#).

The report has identified challenges in the conduct of both the elections and referendum in terms of technology, communication, the postal voting system, the roles and management of returning officers and other staff, staffing numbers, the training of staff and the organisation of the ballot process on the ground.

The review panel note that most of their 74 recommendations for action relate to operational matters and the authors urge the ECQ to act urgently on those recommendations. As an independent statutory authority charged with the vital task of impartially conducting Queensland elections, it is right that the ECQ addresses these specific concerns. The commissioner's response indicates that the ECQ either supports or agrees to consider most of the recommendations ahead of the 2020 local government elections. The commissioner also indicates that recommendations around staff training are already underway.

I have written to the commissioner asking him to report back regularly on the progress of the implementation of these recommendations. As some recommendations of the report are of a policy and legislative nature, I have also tabled the government's response. In addition to a number of policy areas that would require broad consultation prior to any final decisions being made, a future Labor government also commits to undertaking an assessment of all early voting processes to ensure that our electoral system meets the expectations of the community in ensuring accessibility in a modern era. Any reforms to early voting, including postal and prepoll voting, will be undertaken in consultation with stakeholders and the broader community and would apply to the inaugural state election for a four-year fixed parliamentary term in addition to the next local government elections set for 2020. We will also consider permanent dates for local government elections and retaining the current optional preferential voting system for local governments, at least until after the next election.

These issues go to the heart of a fair and free democracy and, as such, are taken very seriously by the Palaszczuk government, which is demonstrably committed to openness and transparency. I look forward to further discussion of the issues identified in this report to ensure that our democratic electoral system is one of best practice and ensures the integrity of a strong and robust voting system that maintains public confidence in the full knowledge we are committed to ensuring that democracy is well served.