




Speech By  
**Jennifer Howard**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 May 2018

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (COUNCILLOR COMPLAINTS) AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL  
(IMPLEMENTING STAGE 1 OF BELCARRA) AND OTHER LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (6.27 pm): I rise to speak today on the Local Government (Councillor Complaints) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Local Government Electoral (Implementing Stage 1 of Belcarra) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The Palaszczuk government is taking a strong stance on accountability and transparency with these bills that we are debating tonight. We are delivering on our election commitment to improve the public's confidence and trust in our system of local government and we are strengthening accountability, transparency and integrity. I would like to commend the Minister for Local Government for his work on delivering these bills.

The councillor complaints bill will put into place a more streamlined, transparent and independent councillor complaint system. It establishes an Independent Assessor to investigate complaints and determine how conduct should be dealt with. From now on local government CEOs will no longer undertake preliminary assessments for councillor complaints. This will deliver objective independence into the process. The Independent Assessor will then determine how the councillor's conduct should be dealt with in a fair and objective manner. The minister will also set a uniform code of conduct for councillors establishing appropriate standards of behaviour.

We expect our democratically elected representatives to treat people, their fellow colleagues and the public with dignity and respect, performing their role diligently and not bringing the local government into disrepute. The Local Government Electoral (Implementing Stage 1 of Belcarra) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill puts in place reforms to ban prohibited donations and implement amendments that will allow the minister to effectively deal with unacceptable and unethical behaviour in councils as well as illegal behaviour.

These amendments will correct an endemic problem in our system of local governance which has unfortunately created a situation where the public has lost faith in their elected local government representatives. I do commend the Minister for Local Government for tackling this problem head on and working to ensure that the public's faith in local governments can be restored. It is very clear to me and the people in my electorate that this trust needs to be rebuilt and that accountability and transparency must be strengthened and improved in order to move forward as a community.

On behalf of my constituents I want to ensure the best outcome for Ipswich and rebuild trust and confidence in our system of local governance. It is important that the people of my electorate have confidence in their elected representatives. They want to be certain that their local council is working in the community's best interests. They want a local government that they can trust and a council that can deliver outcomes and improve their community.

I do want to put on record the respect I have for all of those hardworking councillors who understand the privilege of representing their communities—those councillors who work hard and show their altruistic commitment to those who elected them—each and every day. Unfortunately, the CCC's investigation has brought forth a number of matters that have resulted in the public losing faith in some of their elected representatives. This has cast a pall over our system of governance at the local level which has accordingly created suspicion and distrust with regard to our locally elected representatives, whether they be guilty or not. Over time this suspicion and distrust can slowly erode the effective governance that is needed for the day-to-day operation of services to our communities.

The Palaszczuk government and the Minister for Local Government have worked hard to strengthen our legislation to make sure that we can restore the public's faith and trust in our system of local government, and I wholly support and commend these two bills to the House.