




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Record of Proceedings, 28 March 2019

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.21 pm): I, too, rise to speak in favour of the report, and I would like to acknowledge my fellow committee members. I concur with the views expressed by the member for Macalister. The Ombudsman has performed very well indeed. As an officer of this parliament, I think that is something of which we can all be proud.

I was speaking with my honourable friend the member for Coomera, who alerted me to the fact that the word ‘ombudsman’ is Swedish for ‘protector of people’s rights’. Well might he be called an ombudsman because Mr Clarke has performed particularly well. I note that his workload and that of his staff has been increasing. The number of complaints dealt with by the Ombudsman in the most recent year was up by 16.5 per cent, yet the number of investigations which were completed within 90 days remains at 90 per cent, with almost 100 per cent completed within 12 months. When we consider some of the scope and complexity of the complaints that the Ombudsman’s office receives, I think those are outstanding statistics.

One particular statistic that the Ombudsman was proud to alert us to was the proportion of complaints causing a corrective action in the agency complained about. In the past 12 months that has gone from 22.3 per cent to 13.5 per cent. That is a very significant statistic because it indicates that agencies which are scrutinised by the Ombudsman—and that includes state government departments, local government and university institutions which are domiciled in Queensland—are getting better. I think that is in no small part due to the work that the Ombudsman and his staff have done in recent times going out into the field and conducting a strategic campaign to educate institutions on how best to sharpen their administrative practices and how to deal with clients. I had a brief exchange with the Ombudsman during the last hearing we had with him. I put it to him that with that rate of improvement he might be doing himself out of a job. He responded that when he took the job on he hoped that he would be doing himself out of a job in due course.

All banter aside, I think the Ombudsman and his staff ought to be congratulated. As a local member, I refer a lot of matters to him on behalf of constituents. My constituents have always told me that his staff have been responsive and helpful. I certainly congratulate them on their care of the public good. As I say, I support the report.