




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Record of Proceedings, 17 October 2019

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.01 pm): I rise to speak on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee oversight report on the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman. I am the deputy chair of the committee and broadly concur with the account given earlier by my honourable friend the member for Toohey, the chairman of the committee. I also acknowledge the other members of the committee, the members for Mansfield, Macalister, Lockyer and Mirani.

Happily, we have had a fair bit to do with the Ombudsman since the start of the parliament. They have been very accommodating and we have been able to visit them and interact freely with the officers of the Ombudsman. I thank the Ombudsman, Phil Clarke, and his staff for their care of the public good because many people—and I am sure we understand it ourselves—sometimes find it difficult to get some progress. Having a cop on the beat like the Ombudsman who can deal with some of the difficulties in public administration and complaints of people is very comforting. I note that, when the Ombudsman appeared before us late last year for a public briefing on progress in implementing its strategic review, the Ombudsman, Mr Clarke, reported—

I would report to the committee at this point in time that, of the 72 recommendations made in the report, 36 of them are either complete or ongoing. In other words, they did not require a substantial change to what we did in the office, so we continued to support them. Above and beyond those 36 there are a further six where I have written to the Attorney-General. They are those recommendations requiring legislative reform ...

He sought the Attorney-General's support for this. The remaining recommendations are in train. I am satisfied that the Ombudsman is well and truly on top of that.

One issue I recall particularly from that briefing was that the Ombudsman was able to reveal some very good key performance indicators about how the Ombudsman is dealing with complaints. The mean time to deal with a complaint and finalise it was only 10 days, a remarkable achievement considering the volume of work that the Ombudsman faces.

The Ombudsman also was able to point out that there had been a significant reduction in the number of outcomes from investigations which required corrective action by the public sector agency involved. I asked the Ombudsman whether he felt that could be because of the work they had been doing at some length to educate public sector agencies and to go out and do presentations and so forth on good administrative practice to avoid conflicts and disputes and whether that had some bearing. I was pleased to hear him say that he thought it might. I also joked that at the rate things were going we may not require an Ombudsman! But I do not think that that will happen any time soon. My honourable friend the member for Lockyer probably remembers that exchange.

I have had occasion to deal with the Ombudsman a fair bit in terms of constituent issues. It is very good for me as a local member who does not have the expertise in all the fields of public administration involved to be able to refer complaints to the Ombudsman. I know that Mr Clarke would

agree that he does receive a lot of correspondence from me. I congratulate him on his ongoing stewardship of the Ombudsman's office. I thank him and his staff for their courtesy and openness with us.