




Speech By
Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Record of Proceedings, 14 February 2019

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Schwarten, Hon. R

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (2.23 pm): I would like to provide an update on the serious allegations I raised last year against a former member of this House and QBCC board member, Robert Schwarten. As a result of those allegations, Mr Schwarten self-referred to the Crime and Corruption Commission in December. We all know that Mr Schwarten is a colourful character. As we heard yesterday, he certainly likes to use colourful language. Based on the claims and allegations provided by concerned citizens, including subcontractors in Central Queensland, it would seem there may be well be a darker side to him.

Mr Schwarten is a fan of attending major football matches. How do we know this? I have been informed that he utilised the jet of now failed building company, JM Kelly, on numerous occasions to attend major football games when he was the housing minister. Mysteriously, none of that air travel seems to appear on his interests register.

On top of this generosity, his long-term friendship with Geoff Murphy was so strong that Mr Schwarten's farewell function, which was held at the Rockhampton showgrounds and attended by hundreds of people, was apparently paid for by JM Kelly. Furthermore, I have been told that Geoff Murphy rang around businesspeople in Rockhampton asking them to donate \$5,000 a head to Rob Schwarten as a farewell gift. It has also been alleged that when Mr Schwarten was the responsible minister for the Labor government's cool schools program, the program was limited to a select group of contractors, with the people who controlled that process receiving kickbacks. Further allegations have been received that a superintendent at the Rockhampton Hospital was providing inside information on plans and costings to JM Kelly—thereby, giving them an unfair advantage in the tendering process.

More recently, it has been alleged that Mr Schwarten visited JM Kelly offices in Rockhampton in the days leading up to the company being put into liquidation. One has to ask whether that is appropriate as a board member of the QBCC at a time when the company was under investigation, and what was discussed at that meeting.

I note Mr Schwarten has self-referred to the Crime and Corruption Commission. As it has now been approximately six weeks and I have not been contacted by the CCC, I will not be waiting to see if an investigation is proceeding. Instead, I would like to assure this House, the subcontractors and the people of Queensland that within the next few days I will be making a submission to the CCC containing the details of emails, interviews and phone calls I have conducted. I hope that with the special powers and resources available to this agency it will be possible to shine a light on the dark clouds that hang over Mr Schwarten.