




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 15 July 2020

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Further Answer to Question, Konnech

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (11.17 am): I rise to make a ministerial statement and respond to the questions put in question time around the Electoral Commission. I firstly say that any democratic system and any democratic electoral system requires the trust and confidence of its citizens in those systems. We have a very proud democratic electoral system in this state and in this country. As such, it is very important that elected members of parliament on all sides do their absolute best to ensure that the community has that confidence and trust. Any challenge to the integrity of our institutions, particularly our electoral institution, should be done with extreme caution and based on clear facts and evidence. To risk people not wanting to vote or to have their data held because of those accusations is a very serious path to go down.

Recent media reports claiming that offshore coders are able to access sensitive electoral data are false. Let me say that again: recent media reports claiming that offshore coders are able to access sensitive electoral roll data are false. All data within the electoral management system, including election results and elector details, is stored in an Australian based cloud system to the certified standard of our foremost cybersecurity agency, the Australian Signals Directorate—

Mr Mickelberg: So no-one accessed it from China?

Mrs D'ATH: Maybe you would like me to finish my statement then you will get your answer. All data within the election management system, including election results and elector details, is stored in an Australian based cloud system to the certified standard of our foremost cybersecurity agency, the Australian Signals Directorate, and is suitably secure.

The EMS is an administrative system that supports the processes required to conduct electoral events. It does not conduct electronic voting, count votes or determine election outcomes. I have been advised that Konnech Australia does not have access to the electoral roll. However, any person in Queensland can access the electoral roll at an Electoral Commission Queensland office. It is a public record. All vote counting is undertaken by ECQ election staff and results are checked and verified through multiple stages prior to the declaration of election outcomes. Put simply, the hosting environment for the data is designed so that no-one outside Australia can access the electoral roll through the EMS nor can any individual outside of the ECQ publish or alter election result data.

The ECQ engaged Konnech Australia as the supplier to develop its new election management system following an open procurement process that commenced in 2015. The contract was entered into by the previous electoral commissioner. The ECQ has kept federal government stakeholders apprised of the progress of the EMS. Australian Electoral Commission representatives attended the system presentations of the two short-listed suppliers during the tender process in 2017. There has been an Australian Electoral Commission representative who sits on the steering committee overseeing the rollout of EMS since 2018.

In May 2019 the Australian Cyber Security Centre conducted an assessment of any potential risks relating to the development of the EMS to ensure that all required steps were being undertaken to safeguard the security of the system. The ACSC did not make any recommendations to the effect that intervention in the program such as a decision to terminate or postpone delivery was warranted. The local government elections were delivered in March and there were no cybersecurity issues associated with the development or use of the EMS for these elections. To ensure best practice, the EMS is subject to ongoing review and testing by cybersecurity experts. Ensuring appropriate security controls is central to the development of the system.

Having now absolutely clarified for everyone in this chamber that all data is stored securely here in Australia and not provided to any companies offshore, including Konnech Australia does not have access to the electoral roll, I now hope and expect every elected member of this parliament to now correct any social media posts or anything else they have said that puts fears into people and undermines our electoral system in Queensland. To do anything other than that is completely irresponsible.