




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Local Government Association of Queensland; Office of the Independent Assessor

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.49 pm): Earlier this week I had the privilege of joining mayors and councillors at the 125th LGAQ conference, held in Mackay. This conference marks the retirement of CEO Greg Hallam. Greg's career has spanned four decades of service to local government in various capacities in Brisbane City, Canberra, Esk shire, Townsville City and at the LGAQ. I sincerely thank Greg for his service and wish him well in retirement. I welcome Alison Smith as the first female appointed to the role of LGAQ CEO and congratulate her on the appointment.

It is disappointing that this Labor government only cares about how things look, not how they are. This government will only respond to something under the glare of the media. Again, this has happened with the overreach of the Office of the Independent Assessor. I have held reservations about how the OIA is functioning and I have raised these issues in estimates hearings. However, the issue was brought to the fore when the OIA pursued journalists at the *Fassifern Guardian & Tribune* newspaper regarding a complaint against a Scenic Rim councillor. The paper challenged the OIA in the Supreme Court. It was then that things began to unravel. There was also the front page regarding the mayor of Barcaldine, Sean Dillon, who is under investigation for potential misconduct for expressing his concerns regarding the rollout of vaccinations in the Central West, concerns which reflect a matter of great interest to his community. If upheld, the right to freedom of political communication for all elected local government representatives would be impacted. This is overreach on steroids. It has no place in a democratic society.

There is a laundry list of cases that then were articulated by the *Courier-Mail*. I have been advised by elected members that they have been reprimanded for talking too loudly in a council meeting, blocking someone on Facebook or looking disinterested in a council meeting—and some have been subjected to politically weaponised investigations spanning 2½ years to then only result in one hour's training. Imagine if members here were reprimanded for talking too loudly in the parliament! It would be disastrous.

I encourage all mayors and councillors to consider submitting to the parliamentary committee inquiry into the Office of the Independent Assessor. Many raised concerns with me at the LGAQ conference about reprisal against them. I can assure submitters that, in terms of the inquiry to be held by the committee, the parliament will provide them with the protection of parliamentary privilege.