



Speech By  
**Brent Mickelberg**


**MEMBER FOR BUDERIM**

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Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2021

**MOTION**

**Queensland Building and Construction Commission**

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (5.50 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the shadow minister for housing noting widespread concern about the Queensland Building and corrupt—and Construction Commission and calling on the state government to launch an inquiry into the issue.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr MICKELBERG:** That was a slip of the tongue; I take that interjection. As piles of evidence showing allegations of corruption and political interference by the Minister for Public Works continue to stack up, it should be clear to all Queenslanders that the QBCC can no longer call itself an independent building regulator. What Queenslanders have seen over recent weeks is evidence that the minister has been helping his union mates line their pockets for far too long while honest hardworking Queenslanders are being left for broke. How do they stand a chance?

It is small and family businesses across Queensland that suffer as union thugs attempt to squash anyone who does not join them, as union heavies and ALP mates use their influence over a minister who does not care about the little bloke and who only wants to look after his mates. The fire protection reform racket is a great example of looking after your mates. Out of nowhere, hundreds of Queensland's small and family businesses were surprised by a covert action designed to drive them out of business. All of a sudden, businesses right across regional Queensland that had operated safely for years now needed to complete a three-year apprenticeship to qualify to do the work they had been doing for decades. It gets worse: it turns out this training can only be done here in South-East Queensland at Beenleigh by a union owned company. The minister does not even try to hide the fact that he is owned by the unions.

Through their actions it is clear how little the state government thinks of regional Queenslanders, of hardworking small and family business owners and their staff. These businesses were given six months warning to complete a three-year course—six months to complete a three-year course! Maybe the minister needs to complete a three-year course in maths so he understands the logistics associated with that. More than 400 Queensland businesses are involved in the fire protection industry. That is 400 businesses that face bankruptcy on Monday. They will have to shut up shop and lay off staff if the minister and his mates get their way, as is likely.

The minister told an estimates hearing in August that the reforms were 'designed in consultation with the industry over five years'. Five years? It was more like seven months of consultation with union mates looking for a payday. Industry feedback makes it clear there was no consultation with the Fire Protection Association of Australia or any small business groups. The minister has no problem with misleading parliament and he certainly has no problem misleading Queenslanders. He has rejected all accusations of being in bed with the QBCC, but he has been exposed by the shadow minister. Telling an estimates hearing that neither he nor his office had any involvement in QBCC operational matters might be the biggest mistruth of all.

Speaking of helping your mates, the Cullen Group is alleged to have not been paying their subcontractors and this so-called building watchdog was aware of that, but those high up in the QBCC leadership did not pull their licence. The Cullen Group continued on its merry way, racking up millions and millions of dollars in debt before finally collapsing. The minister's fingerprints are all over it once again, writ large in emails between his office and former QBCC commissioner Brett Bassett. In another case on the Gold Coast the judge found that the QBCC 'acted beyond its powers', as was mentioned by the member for Burleigh, where six conditions placed on small building company Groupline were invalid and imposed unlawfully. There were more emails between Mr Bassett and—you guessed it—the Minister for Public Works. This is just another example of looking after his mates.

**Mr Minnikin:** Bananacube?

**Mr MICKELBERG:** Bananacube indeed! Allegations of bullying and coercion within the QBCC should be taken very seriously. We have seen brave whistleblowers and former senior staff come forward. They were targeted by the leadership at the watchdog and would only be left alone if they toed the line. Well, they cannot do it any longer and they are leaving the QBCC in droves. They cannot stand it any longer, and neither will the LNP. The fact that the QBCC leadership keeps getting away with acts of bullying, coercion and alleged corruption goes to show how much influence they have with their mates in parliament—especially their best mate, the Minister for Public Works.

I would have thought the Minister for Public Works would prefer to have a parliamentary inquiry into the QBCC and his interference. After all, the alternative might be a CCC investigation into his actions, because the evidence is mounting day by day. Ordinary Queenslanders cannot have any faith that this minister or the QBCC leadership are working in their interest.