




Speech By
Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Queensland Building and Construction Commission, Review

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (2.46 pm): It has finally happened. After relentless pressure from the opposition and the media, the Minister for Public Works has been dragged kicking and screaming and has announced an inquiry into the QBCC. He has finally acknowledged there is something wrong. Although that sounds like a very encouraging move, I have very grave doubts about the inquiry which has been announced. Of course we have not seen any terms of reference.

If the inquiry is not fully independent, if the inquiry does not protect whistleblowers, both past employees and current employees, if the inquiry does not look at conflicts of interest amongst the board, if the inquiry does not look at what interventions the minister or his staff have made with the QBCC, it is a Mickey Mouse inquiry. It is a Clayton's inquiry, an inquiry you have when not having an inquiry.

We have seen this government before with its record of inquiries and seeing that they go nowhere; they are simply about carrying out a process, making it look like something is happening. This is too serious to be treated with that disrespect.

We have already tabled in the parliament what those terms of reference should look like. The minister would be doing himself a favour if he looked up *Hansard*, saw the terms of reference that we have already tabled, and simply tabled the same terms of reference, because it is only if we cover those aspects that I have mentioned that builders and home owners alike will have some sort of confidence that this is an inquiry that will get somewhere.

If honourable members want further evidence of why we need an inquiry, they only need to look at the correspondence that the chairman of the board of the QBCC, Dick Williams, recently sent to his staff. He has obviously realised that they are under siege and felt that he needed to encourage the employees, so he wrote a three-page missive to try to encourage them. The first thing I want to say about this message from Mr Williams is that we are not attacking the employees of the QBCC. Our criticism is of the leadership, the board of the QBCC, the chair and other certain members where there are allegations of conflict of interest, and our attack is on the person who appoints those board members. That is the Minister for Public Works, not the hardworking members of the QBCC who themselves have had enough of the interference, the conflicts of interest and not being able to do their job unhindered.

Look at some of the comments that Mr Williams made to the staff. He said at one time, 'We are fighting with one arm behind our back,' and that is the QBCC. The QBCC are the victims, yet they are the ones saying they are the underdogs with all the resources they have such as increased staff of 40 per cent over the last five years. Their key performance indicator in the 2020-21 financial year: 17 contentious issues received media coverage. That means that 99 per cent of the finalised claims did not end up in the media. So their KPI is not whether they make the right decision but whether or not it gets in the media. What sort of KPI is that?

The other thing he said which is of grave concern is, 'As we have seen in the media, unfortunately, a small cohort of disgruntled former employees of this organisation have been making public statements.' These are the brave, hardworking former members of the QBCC who in the end said, 'We aren't taking this anymore. We are not going to accept this board interference or these conflicts of interest. We're not going to be instructed to sack staff who do not deserve to be sacked.' They are not going to carry out those things that were simply unjust. He then encouraged people to use the internal channels to appropriately look at these allegations. That is the problem: Caesar judging Caesar.

This inquiry is essential. There is no use having an inquiry unless it is suitably equipped. A commission of inquiry, a judicial commission of inquiry, is the only option that will ensure this is a fair dinkum review.