Speech By

Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND CORRUPTION COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

Mr MILLAR (Gregory—LNP) (3.13 pm): I rise to make a short contribution on the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee's report No. 108, *Inquiry into the Crime and Corruption Commission's investigation of former councillors of Logan City Council; and related matters*. Madam Deputy Speaker, with your indulgence I would like to talk about the impact this matter has on all councillors, especially those in Western Queensland councils, and what has happened over the last 12 months. One of the biggest difficulties we have when it comes to councils in Western Queensland is finding people who want to stand for council. I am talking about councils such as Diamantina, which covers a huge area, Boulia, Barcoo, Longreach and Central Highlands, which is the size of Tasmania.

Councillors are now coming to me and saying, 'Why am I doing this?' When they saw the CCC investigation into the Logan City Council, they started to get worried. We need to have good public advocacy in our regional councils. It is getting harder and harder to get those types of people to stand for council. Last night in Brisbane the generosity of the Western Queensland councils could be seen when they gave over $100,000 to the Flood Appeal. They recognise that when they are in trouble in drought—as the minister for agriculture understands—it is the people of Brisbane and South-East Queensland who rally for them. Relating that back to this report, the problem is that many councillors, whether they be in Woorabinda council or in the Central Highlands Regional Council, are starting to question the scrutiny they are under and asking, 'Why am I doing this? It is getting more and more impossible.' Those councillors out there do not get paid a lot of money. In fact, many of those councillors leave businesses behind to serve their community. I have a couple of friends who are councillors who have lost money—not that they complain about it.

The CCC needs to be beyond reproach. It needs to have integrity. It needs to be believed in. I am not knocking the CCC; they need to do their job and they have an important job to do. The member for Scenic Rim as chair and his fellow committee members were able to establish that we have some issues there that need to be addressed. There needs to be confidence in the CCC. With the CCC, trust is important and integrity is important. The CCC hold a valuable position in Queensland whereby they need to be trusted and their integrity needs to be beyond question. There are good people in the CCC. I just think we need to build that trust up again.

We also need to recognise that Western Queensland councillors and mayors are different from South-East Queensland councillors. I am not taking anything away from the Brisbane City, Gold Coast or Sunshine Coast councillors, but many of the councillors out my way do not do it for the pay; they do it for the service. They do it because they are connected to the community. They do it because they are involved in the local pony club or the local Rugby League club.

When it comes to conflicts of interest, we have to be a little more understanding of Western Queensland, regional and remote councillors in that they will be involved in a lot of issues and a lot of clubs. They should not be fearful of nominating that they have a conflict of interest in the council meeting

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and have to remove themselves. They have a genuine interest in trying to play an important role in the local activities in their community. We need to have a better understanding of what a Western Queensland or remote councillor has to do compared to a major city councillor. I am not taking anything away from those major city councillors; they do a fantastic job. I know that the member for Clayfield was in the Brisbane City Council and did a fantastic job, but we have to have more flexibility in the way we look at things and the CCC needs to be able to understand that as well.