



Speech By  
**Michael Crandon**


**MEMBER FOR COOMERA**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2022

**PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND CORRUPTION COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (3.32 pm): I rise to make a contribution to report No. 108 of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee, titled *Inquiry into the Crime and Corruption Commission's investigation of former councillors of Logan City Council; and related matters*. This inquiry and the report that resulted from it is the most significant piece of work undertaken by the PCCC in my time as a member of the committee. It was thorough and all-encompassing, and the final report was bipartisan and unanimously supported by all members. I note that all recommendations were accepted by the government.

I turn now to some observations I made emanating from the process. Firstly, I note that during questioning there was a high number of instances where words to the effect 'I do not recall' were used in answer by witnesses to questions posed by counsel or members of the committee. Troublingly, this is a similar response that was provided around 60 times each by both DS Francis and the then chair of the CCC, Alan MacSporran QC.

On the material we have seen and the evidence given by witnesses, any reasonable person would come to the same conclusion that I have. Simply put, the CCC were wrong to go down the pathway they went. The CCC should not have charged the seven councillors with fraud and forced the sacking of the Logan City Council.

There were some inconsistencies in answers to some questions. For example, in his evidence, DS Francis insisted it was he who decided to lay the charge of fraud against each of the seven councillors. Later we discovered that it was indeed Mr MacSporran and Mr Alsbury who did that. Interestingly, that charge came as a surprise to other police officers.

Regarding the charge of fraud, Mr MacSporran had quite a bit to say about the DPP supporting the CCC decision to charge because the DPP took the matter to court. My observation on this is that, given what had happened, the Logan City Council being sacked and the administrator appointed, the DPP had little choice. If they had abandoned the case without taking the next step, they would have been pilloried.

After nine days of testing the evidence, the judge and the DPP agreed that abandoning the case was the right thing to do. In fact, His Honour in the court transcript said in response to the DPP's decision not to proceed—

I will be careful with my language—but from what I saw and heard in those two weeks in November I think that's a—that is a proper decision.

So, too, the QIRC adjudicator came to the same conclusions following the QIRC hearings.

In my view, the reality was that the investigating officer was not an independent officer looking at the case after the investigation was complete, looking at all of the evidence for and against. He was too close to the case to form an independent and unbiased view. The case should have been reviewed independently by the DPP or someone external to the CCC.

In many respects, it looks like these seven councillors were the unfortunate target of a CCC chairperson bent on nailing a few elected local government representatives with a serious charge. Mr MacSporran's press release spoke to that, saying that the charges from Operation Front are a stark reminder of the problems in the local government sector in Queensland. It turned out that there were only two local government people that had been imprisoned from 2015 through to today. However, it does seem to reflect some of the aspirations that Mr MacSporran had.

I will make some comments now regarding transcripts during the hearing. Mr Heaton QC made the strong point—

What might appear to have persuasive strength in written form and in a statement taken by police officers, does not always reflect how the evidence comes across when given orally.

I would add: particularly when it is biased and one-sided the way this was.

I note I am running out of time, so I will conclude by saying that the internal actions of the CCC officers, including the chair, police officers and lawyers involved in the case, were corrupted. The consequences of corruption accumulate. Failure to react to errors or corruption in the data when they occur incrementally causes the error to be stored up, compounding across time.

I wish all of the councillors well for their future and hope that this action taken by us has, in some way, given them some sense of natural justice being achieved. I will finish with a quote from the Bible that sums it up—John 8:32: 'The truth will set you free.'