




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2022

MOTION

Office of the Integrity Commissioner

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (5.57 pm): Wasn't that a rant? We have heard a number of statements from those opposite. The member for Maroochydore said that 'the House is in control of its own destiny', the member for Chatsworth said that 'the chamber reigns supreme' and we just heard the member for Everton say that we are 'the ultimate committee'. All of those statements are correct, but with that power comes responsibility. I have not heard anyone taking responsibility for what they are asking this chamber to do today. This motion has to be taken seriously. Of course, I support the amendment moved by the Attorney-General and oppose the motion moved by the member for Maroochydore.

The motion moved by those opposite asks for all documents to be released by the Economics and Governance Committee by close of business on 24 February. It does not call for all documents other than certain serious confidential documents that are protected by law or should be redacted—just all documents. They do so knowing what they are asking to be released. They do so openly knowing what they are asking.

The Premier made a statement in this House that the matters she referred to the Economics and Governance Committee had been assessed as a public interest disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act. The act contains protections for whistleblowers to encourage disclosure of wrongdoing in the public sector. The protections provided by the act include confidentiality protections which extend to the identity, occupation and address of a person who makes a disclosure as well as the subject matter and detail of the matters disclosed. Breaches of those confidentiality protections constitute offences which attract serious criminal consequences under the act. The committee was informed that the matters had been assessed as a public interest disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act.

That is what we are debating here today. I hope the members of the crossbench are listening to this as well. We are being asked to not respect the processes of a committee that can make those decisions based on all of the information that it has before it—the respect that we have always shown parliamentary committees—and override that and ask for a public interest disclosure to be revealed in this chamber and to remove that person's right as a whistleblower to protection and use the privilege of this House to do it. I will not use and abuse that power the way those opposite are asking us to.

Aside from the objects of the act which are to promote the facilitation of public interest disclosures for wrongdoing in the public sector and afford protection from reprisal to persons making a public interest disclosure, I go to the standing orders that we are operating under in this chamber today. Schedule 5 relates to public interest disclosures. We can release public interest disclosures under privilege and not be caught by privilege and contempt. It goes on to say—

... but members are called upon to adhere to these guidelines so as to ensure public interest disclosures are properly investigated, that those making disclosures are protected and that no person's reputation is unnecessarily damaged before the investigation of the allegations has been finalised.

It is wrong to suggest that that person's rights under these standing orders and under public interest disclosure should be ignored because we want to see what is before the committee.

We have to look at this behaviour because it is not just related to this motion. Yesterday the member for Kawana said—

I call on Premier Palaszczuk to order the immediate release of this Crime and Corruption Commission report.

We will just say to the CCC, 'You ignore whatever else is going on. I know it is your report. I know you are an independent body, but we are going to the Premier to say it should be released.' They are doing this in opposition. The people of Queensland should look very closely at what they are proposing to do in opposition because imagine what they would do if they were in government. We have seen this arrogance before.

What we need to do is respect process. We need to respect the integrity bodies. We need to ensure that if anyone has any evidence 'they put up or shut up', stop prosecuting things with trial by media and make sure that they put it to the relevant authorities. I am summarising what the member for Kawana said.

(Time expired)