




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2023

STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE

Unauthorised Disclosure of Committee Proceedings

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (10.16 am): As chair of the State Development and Regional Industries Committee, I rise to report a matter involving the inadvertent unauthorised disclosure of a private committee transcript of the State Development and Regional Industries Committee. The transcript was of a private hearing conducted in Bundaberg on 8 March 2022 for the committee's inquiry into the functions of the Office of the Independent Assessor.

On becoming aware of the breach, the Parliamentary Service began immediate investigations into the circumstance of the publication and its wider implications. These investigations found that a combination of factors, including an error by a Parliamentary Service employee and a system defect, resulted in the disclosure. It is clear to us on the committee that the disclosure was inadvertent, it was a mistake, and it was not deliberate nor mischievous. We acknowledge the impact that this breach has had on the affected witness.

We are satisfied that the Parliamentary Service has dealt with this matter thoroughly and appropriately. As such, we do not intend to refer this matter to the Ethics Committee for further investigation.

I take this opportunity to remind those who may have accessed a transcript that the document remains a confidential document of the State Development and Regional Industries Committee. It has not been authorised for release, and a further disclosure could amount to contempt of parliament. I obtained consent from the Speaker and seek leave from the House to incorporate the remainder of this report into the *Record of Proceedings*.

Leave granted.

As the transcript is a document of the State Development and Regional Industries Committee we have discharged our responsibilities set out in Report No. 42 of the former Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee as they relate to unauthorised disclosures.

This included assessing the source, significance, and merit of further investigation into matter, to determine whether to report the incident to the Legislative Assembly and/or make a referral to the Ethics Committee.

Our deliberations have included consideration of whether the disclosure was a substantial interference with the work of the committee; whether it was inadvertent, deliberate or mischievous; and whether it was an isolated occurrence or indicative of a larger problem within the Parliamentary Service.

It is clear to us that the disclosure was inadvertent, a mistake. It was not deliberate nor mischievous.

Both the Committee and Parliamentary Service have acknowledged the significance of the information breach and apologised for the impact that it has had on affected parties.

The committee has sought assurances that lessons have been learned from this incident and that steps have been taken to reduce the risk of a similar occurrence.

We are satisfied that the Parliamentary Service has dealt with this matter thoroughly and appropriately. We are also satisfied that the disclosure is not indicative of a larger information-security issue within the Parliamentary Service and that appropriate risk mitigation measures have been put in place.

As such, the committee has taken the view that the most appropriate way forward is to report the matter to the Legislative Assembly. We do not intend to refer this matter to the Ethics Committee for further investigation.