




Speech By
Don Brown

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Record of Proceedings, 15 November 2023

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (COUNCILLOR CONDUCT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr BROWN** (Capalaba—ALP) (3.32 pm): I rise in support of the councillor conduct bill that is before the House. I want to talk about the conduct of two councillors in my local area—one who has demonstrated good conduct and one who has demonstrated poor conduct. This shows how the OIA has been used to attack the one who has displayed good conduct but not the other one who has performed well below the expectations of the community. We all know of the incident in June 2022 when the LNP mayor of the Redlands chose to get in her car while drunk and drink drive and crash that vehicle.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BROWN: They do not want me to speak about it for some reason. I do not know why.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): Order, members! The member on his feet is not taking interjections. He is entitled to be heard.

Mr BROWN: That night the LNP mayor let our city down and brought it into disrepute. It is now a matter for the OIA. The OIA has investigated that matter and it is before the tribunal. I put in that complaint to the OIA for assessment because it also relates to conduct before the incident. We can all recall that the LNP mayor Karen Williams was on a Zoom call with victims of drink driving before she jumped in her car—

Mr HART: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I seek your guidance about the appropriateness of the member speaking to a matter before a tribunal.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Capalaba, can you assure the House that you are not breaching the standing orders regarding sub judice?

Mr BROWN: My understanding is that sub judice only relates to the civil court and the criminal court.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will take some advice.

Mr BROWN: The criminal matter is finalised. She served her community service.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for that clarification. Member for Capalaba, you are correct.

Mr BROWN: Thank you. Of course I am correct. I will table the letter for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 23 November 2022, from the Senior Lawyer, Office of the Independent Assessor, Nilusha Rajapakse, to the member for Capalaba, Mr Don Brown MP, regarding a complaint in relation to the conduct of the Mayor of Redlands City Council [1894](#).

The OIA's response to me says—

The CCT has a large number of matters which have been referred to it by the OIA and which are being dealt with in chronological order. Therefore, it may be some time until this matter is dealt with.

That is why we have this bill before us now. There is a strong possibility that this tribunal hearing will not be held before the next election. The people of Redlands should have the right to know, through this tribunal process, the outcome of the matter involving the LNP mayor Karen Williams being drunk at work and then hopping into her car and crashing it. That is why this bill goes towards strengthening the number on the tribunal and making sure there is a speedy process so we can get those resolutions.

There is also a previous LNP councillor out my way who received over \$2,000 worth of fines from the tribunal six to 12 months after he lost at the last election in 2020. We need to ensure that the public knows the outcome of matters that are before the tribunal before the elections so they can make informed decisions about the conduct, particularly in my area of Redlands, where poor conduct from LNP councillors comes up time and time again.

Following this drink driving incident, Councillor Adelia Berridge, who is the Redland City councillor for division 9, which is in my electorate of Capalaba, called out the mayor for her behaviour and called for her to resign. That was fair; I called for her to resign as well. Since then, Councillor Berridge has received 34 complaints—and I think 32 have been anonymous complaints—to the OIA. The LNP and Karen's crew have put in anonymous complaint after anonymous complaint against this good, local serving councillor just because she had the guts to call it out. It is great that this bill goes some way towards making sure those vexatious complaints—

Mrs GERBER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I want to draw the Deputy Speaker's attention to the unparliamentary language used by the member. I ask him to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I did not hear any unparliamentary language. Member, if you made an unparliamentary remark, I ask that you withdraw.

Mr BROWN: I withdraw. Councillor Berridge stood up against the LNP mayor's behaviour. I also table a letter in response to one of the claims that was dismissed against Councillor Berridge in which the OIA admitted that a level of 'dysfunctionality' has existed since June 2022.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 20 February 2023, from the Deputy Independent Assessor, Office of the Independent Assessor, Mr Charles Kohn, to Redland City Council Councillor, Ms Adelia Berridge, regarding an alleged complaint against Councillor Berridge [1895](#).

The OIA knows that when your leadership and the leadership of the whole city is put into such disrepute it only leads to dysfunction. It is shocking that one councillor calling this out has received 34 mostly anonymous—all of them dismissed, I might add—vexatious complaints. These mostly came from Karen Williams's crew, people like ex-LNP candidate for Springwood Julie Talty and the councillor for division 7, Rowanne McKenzie. I get her name mixed up because she went under the fake alias Scarlett Rivers that time she got caught creating fake Facebook accounts and putting in fake email complaints to police officers. The police had to investigate her. They went to her house and seized her computers. That just shows the level the LNP locally in the Redlands stoops to in order to attack good councillors.

Mr Langbroek interjected.

Mr BROWN: I take the interjection. I cannot believe those opposite are defending this LNP mayor. I cannot believe they are defending someone who gets in the car at over 3½ times—

Mr Langbroek interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): Order! Pause the clock. Member for Surfers Paradise, you will withdraw that interjection.

Mr LANGBROEK: I withdraw.

Mr BROWN: This bill is about councillor conduct. I am talking about the conduct of an LNP mayor who decided, after a budget, to get on the wines and at over 3½ times the legal limit jump on a Zoom call with victims of drink driving, turning the camera off and on as she took swigs of wine, and then jumped in the council Lexus and decided to plough into a tree and tried to hide all of the facts about it.

Dr Rowan: Tell us about Karen Struthers.

Mr BROWN: I take the interjection. Matt Burnett was caught at .05—right on the limit—fessed up to it and did not crash the car.

Ms Pease: At least he owned up to it, didn't he?

Mr BROWN: He owned it.

Ms Pease: He owned it. He stood up to it.

Mr BROWN: He stood up to it. We have a mayor who should have resigned straightaway. Even the OIA letter that I tabled shows that massive dysfunctionality has occurred in the Redlands. She does not turn up to any events anymore. She does not turn up to Remembrance Day. She does not turn up to Anzac Day anymore. She goes to one meeting a month and collects the pay cheque, and that is what we are left with—

Mr Power: And that's what you're all defending.

Mr BROWN:—LNP dysfunction, and that is what those on that side are trying to defend. I do not understand why they do not want me to speak on this matter. This bill goes towards ensuring that we get to find out earlier through a more efficient tribunal what really happened that night. How drunk was Karen Williams that night? Why did she talk with victims of drink drivers that night? That is all before the tribunal right now and we need to ensure that we beef up that tribunal so we can ensure that we get outcomes before the election so we can go to the polls knowing the full extent of the conduct of the LNP mayor in Redlands.

Finally, I want to wrap up by saying that I congratulate councillors like Adelia Berridge who stood up to the mayor and who has endured, as I said, 34 frivolous and vexatious complaints. I am glad that this legislation goes towards ensuring that these vexatious complaints do not occur. We could go one step further in that a lot of the complaints at Redland City Council have come from fellow councillors against other councillors. A councillor complaining against another councillor should have to put their name to the complaint. I think that is a step further that we could take to ensure that when a person stands up and does the right thing there are not vexatious complaints made against them to ensure that we have the best behaviour in Redlands and that we have the best leadership in Redlands. The people of Redlands have a right to know the exact outcome of the tribunal before the election. I wholeheartedly support this bill.