




Speech By
Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2023

**STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE: REPORT,
MOTION TO TAKE NOTE**

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (3.51 pm): Most of the members on the committee are going to explain the committee's report, so I am going to be very brief. I am unusually going to praise the committee and the Labor members on the committee for the work they did on this particular bill. As the member for Bancroft has explained, we came up with those 40 recommendations in a bipartisan way.

There are real issues with the legislation around the OIA and it needs to be changed. I think the government has a big job to change it. I hope they will take the recommendations the committee made seriously and make those changes as soon as possible. The secretariat did a fantastic job in pulling together the thoughts we all had. I think we went through four or five different iterations of the report. The secretariat was forced to rewrite it a number of times because of the things we kept adding to the report.

What really surprised me as we went around different councils and talked to them was the amount of dysfunction that is happening in some of our councils. We saw some politically-based councils and some non-political councils, but there seems to be factions in every council and they are actually weaponising the OIA against other councillors. Some of these meetings were in camera so I am not going to go into too much depth, but we saw councillors in tears at some of our meetings. We saw councillors who no longer want to be councillors, and I do not blame them. They have to be so cautious with what they say and what they do because of the system that is in place, and it has made them, quite frankly, unable to do their job. The government has a big job to fix this.

One of the key issues we discussed over and over again is the right of councillors to have freedom of political speech. In my view, they do not have as much freedom of political speech as a state member does, and I do not think that is right. I think they should have just as many rights as a state member and they should be put under the same conditions that state members are. I think we can look across the board at applying the same conditions to councillors as we impose on ourselves.

I will let the other members talk more in depth about the report, but it is a very unusual situation for me to praise the chair of my committee and the Labor members for the way they conducted themselves. This is a real report of a real committee of the Queensland parliament. It can work; it just needs to work the right way. If we all try to do—

Mr Madden: And the member for Traeger.

Mr HART: And the crossbencher. I apologise, member for Traeger. We have been on the same committee for 11 years now, member for Traeger.

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr HART: I had a bit of a rest for a little while, but I am back. With that, I commend this bill to the members of the House. I think that all members should have a read of this thing because there are some really good items in there.