




Speech By
Nikki Boyd

MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

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STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (3.18 pm): I welcome this committee report that was initiated by the Deputy Premier. The inquiry included 14 committee hearings in nine towns and cities and it heard from 47 witnesses and received 59 submissions. I thank the committee and all stakeholders engaged in working so diligently and thoroughly on this body of work.

While there is overwhelming agreement that there needs to be an independent councillor complaints system in Queensland, there have been many areas identified as needing strengthening, clarification, resourcing, better streamlined processes, explanation and further reform. The government's response to this report details support for the 40 recommendations, and I know that work has already commenced in earnest to get a bill before the House this year.

These measures are essential for the community to have confidence in the integrity and accountability in local government. The committee has worked hard in a bipartisan way to deliver a report that articulates the issues clearly and comprehensively, and steps out sensible resolutions and processes forward.

I attended the LGAQ 2022 annual conference in Cairns where the committee chair and deputy chair ran a session informing delegates and attendees around the content of the report and inquiry outcomes and saw firsthand the way they worked cooperatively and constructively. I place on record my appreciation for the professional and bipartisan way that they approached this inquiry. It seems that some on the opposition benches have missed the memo where today we have seen the shadow spokesperson, as well as the member for Scenic Rim, stand up and make contributions that were entirely partisan in their nature, aggressive in their approach and just showed how out of touch they are with the work that the committee has done and the way that they have conducted themselves. Admirably, the committee undertook to use this inquiry as an opportunity to improve the whole councillor complaints and conduct system.

As assistant minister, I hear from elected officials, officers and the public right across the state firsthand on how they want, and how Queensland needs, a robust system. This system must have rigour for our 77 local councils, 578 elected representatives and the communities they serve. Working with the sector, it is clear that there must be a better system in place for particularly elected officials to be able to create a healthier workplace.

I have been updating the sector in my conversations around the opportunity that legislative change here will also bring with it the opportunity to clarify the conflict-of-interest system. This is work also progressing and work I look forward to delivering, along with the Palaszczuk government members in this House. Work has already commenced with the department and the OIA to consider these changes in the report and, in some instances, getting to work on their implementation or drafting the necessary legislative change for the needed reforms. This is happening right now and the sector is continuing to work with us.

I extend my thanks to the LGAQ for their really strong continued advocacy in this space. It is through collaboration and processes such as this inquiry that we will provide government with a fulsome and comprehensive approach as we move forward. In addition, I look forward to continuing to engage with the sector and our local government elected officials to be able to adapt, inform and respond to the challenges and the opportunities that face us into the future. We need a robust and timely system. We need a system that the sector has confidence in and one where they are sufficiently supported in, informed and equipped to be able to navigate effectively. These changes will effectively divert and curtail the weaponising of complaints in a timely manner and will address not just vexatious complaints but vexatious complainants. I believe that this is the reset and refocus that is desperately needed in the sector and provides a solid process to continue to monitor and be responsive to areas of need into the future.

I commend the committee wholeheartedly for their hard work and thank the sector for their very active participation. I thank the local government sector for their faith and goodwill as we work together to get to a better position. I look forward to making more of a contribution to this work in my role as assistant minister as we craft these reforms into legislation and that legislation makes its way through this House later this year. I am confident that it will build a better, effective, more robust system that will enable us to put our focus where it should be.

We have so many opportunities working with local government to make our communities and the lives of Queenslanders better. That is the work that we need to be focused on, and that is the job that we are excited to do in partnership. Thank you to the committee, the committee members, the committee secretariat and all of those participants who came before the committee to engage in this process that has delivered this report and outcomes that we very much look forward to implementing.