



Speech By  
**Hon. Deb Frecklington**


**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

---

Record of Proceedings, 20 February 2025

## **CRIME AND CORRUPTION (RESTORING REPORTING POWERS) AMENDMENT BILL**

### **Introduction**

 **Hon. DK FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity) (3.03 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Crime and Corruption Act 2001 and the Crime and Corruption and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024 for particular purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Crime and Corruption (Restoring Reporting Powers) Amendment Bill 2025 [119](#).

*Tabled paper:* Crime and Corruption (Restoring Reporting Powers) Amendment Bill 2025, explanatory notes [120](#).

*Tabled paper:* Crime and Corruption (Restoring Reporting Powers) Amendment Bill 2025, statement of compatibility with human rights [121](#).

There could not be a timelier piece of legislation introduced in this parliament. For years the former government fought hard to keep two reports—two CCC reports—secret. These two reports investigated the allegations of corruption against the former public trustee, Peter Carne, and the former deputy premier Jackie Trad. The LNP called on the former government to make those reports public—we did that for many years—to allow the public, Queenslanders, to make their own judgement and for many years the former Labor government engaged in a monumental cover-up to protect its mates, and it started with the former attorney-general deciding to enable the former deputy premier to have her legal fees paid by us, the Queensland people. The questions remain: why was she covering up for her best buddy and why was she using Queenslanders' dime—Queenslanders' money, taxpayers' hard-earned money—to cover-up for her best mate?

On release of the reports it became immediately clear why those opposite ran the protection racket and why they ran it for so long. These two reports are damning on the way that the former Miles-Palaszczuk Labor government ran its government—completely damning. As the chair of the CCC said, everyone should read these reports. The former government allowed \$397,182 of taxpayers' money to be spent on Trad's legal fees to keep this report hidden, betraying Queenslanders' right to know.

When the High Court ruled that the CCC had no power to report into Peter Carne's conduct as the public trustee, the chair of the CCC asked the Labor government to consider urgent law changes that would protect its reporting powers. Did the former government listen to the chair of the CCC? No, it did not. The only people who were listening to the CCC around accountability, around transparency and about good government was the LNP, and from opposition we dragged those opposite kicking and screaming to a position where they could not handle the pressure any longer.

In the last few dying days of the Miles government those opposite eventually introduced a bill that they knew would never be passed. They hoped beyond hope that they would be able to cling on to power, to keep their powerbroker protected. That is what they were hoping to do. They knew that their

bill was never going to be passed. They knew that they were never going to restore the reporting powers of the CCC. Queenslanders trusted the LNP to do that, and that is what we are doing. We are delivering on our commitment to restore the reporting powers of the CCC, and that is what we are doing here today.

We also know that the LNP vowed to restore integrity and transparency in government by restoring the CCC's reporting powers, and the bill I introduce today does just that. Queenslanders have been kept in the dark for too long because the CCC has been unable to provide vital information to the public about corruption and corruption risks. Queenslanders have a right to know and to be kept informed about the activities of their government if they are able to fully enjoy their democratic rights. Openness and transparency are essential if the public is to have confidence in the processes of government, its leaders and managers and the public sector as a whole.

In performing its corruption functions, the CCC is guided by certain principles as espoused and established in the Crime and Corruption Act 2001. Under the public interest principle the CCC has an overriding responsibility to promote public confidence in the integrity of the public sector and to assure the public that if corruption does happen it is dealt with appropriately. How can the CCC do this if it cannot appropriately tell the public about its corruption investigations? Of course, for many years it was widely accepted that the CCC did have the necessary powers to do this. I will repeat that because that is the important point here: for many years it was widely accepted—by government as well—that the CCC did have the necessary powers to do this. The CCC released numerous reports and public statements over a significant period of time in the performance of its corruption functions.

On 13 September 2023 the High Court determined that the CCC had no power to report on an investigation of alleged corrupt conduct other than confidentially, under section 49 of the act, to certain entities for the purposes of criminal proceedings or disciplinary action being considered. The decision was stark and clear, with its ramifications significant for the operations of Queensland's CCC. In fact, the CCC has, as a result, removed 32 investigation reports and 256 media releases from its website. The CCC had, of course, stopped any form of public reporting well before September 2023 in line with the history of this litigation before the High Court ruling.

As the Minister for Integrity, I am pleased that this bill will bring a close to this unfortunate chapter in the CCC's history once and for all. It will also deliver on the government's key election commitment to restore reporting powers to the CCC and overcome the basis for the High Court decision. The bill clarifies the way in which the CCC performs its corruption functions so that it is clear that this includes providing information to the public by reporting and making public statements about complaints and corruption investigations and provides clear powers to enable the CCC to do so. The language is very clear. It removes the basis of the High Court's decision.

I acknowledge the considerable efforts of my colleague the former shadow attorney-general and member for Clayfield, who presented the Crime and Corruption Amendment Bill in the 57th Parliament in 2023. That bill outlined the LNP's approach to addressing the serious deficiencies in the Crime and Corruption Act highlighted by the High Court decision and past inquiries which is consistent with the bill I present today. I also acknowledge the constructive way the CCC have worked with the government to help address this deficiency in Queensland legislation.

The new powers for reporting and making public statements are subject to new safeguards that apply to the CCC's decisions in relation to the preparation and publication of reports and public statements. These safeguards are in the form of a set of mandatory criteria that apply to both the preparation and the publication of a report or public statement. While the proposed criteria are mandatory considerations, they do not lock the CCC into hard and fast types of reports or public statements; nor will their application result in an outright prohibition on reporting. Importantly, the new framework provides the CCC with flexibility to independently determine when and how releasing information will be in the public interest.

Specific considerations will also apply before the CCC can include identifying information in a report or public statement. The bill requires the CCC to consider a range of matters in deciding whether or not to include information in a report or statement that identifies an individual or from which their identity may be readily apparent. The significance of publicly revealing that someone is the subject of a corruption investigation cannot be understated; however, the discretion will remain with the CCC in regard to this. It is not a decision that the CCC will take lightly. Putting specific legislative factors in place to guide these decisions also serves to illustrate what is at stake and ensure each decision to report is thought through in a considered way. A public statement may take any form, for example the issuing of a media release or the publication of a statement on the CCC's website. Under the Crime and Corruption Act, the CCC retains reporting powers that have not been impacted by the High Court decision. Through the bill, special care has been taken not to impact or diminish this existing residual power.

I would also like to draw out a further clarification provision that has been included in the bill. The bill makes it clear that the CCC does not have the power to make findings of corrupt conduct. This has always been the case and does not change the position under the current act. The CCC's role is to give all relevant material it has uncovered to the decision-making authority, including prosecutors, who are responsible for determining whether further action is warranted. The bill makes this clear through an express provision limiting the CCC's ability to make findings or recommendations relating to a person engaging in corrupt conduct, whether a person should be prosecuted for a criminal offence or disciplinary action, or whether there is evidence or insufficient evidence to support the start of such proceedings. This is to remove any doubt on the matter and avoid the potential for any implied power to be established as a result of this bill.

In some cases it will be appropriate and necessary for the CCC to name the subject of an investigation and make adverse comment about them. That does not amount to a statement that a person has engaged in corrupt conduct. In this case, the CCC is bound by the requirements of the current act to give that person procedural fairness. The Crisafulli government is expanding the procedural fairness requirements and has worked with the CCC on ways to do this. This means that the CCC is required to give the person the opportunity to make submissions about the proposed adverse comment so that the person can give their side of the story and put forward any submissions as to why some or all of the comment should not be included in the report or be reflected in a different way.

The bill revises the approach under the current Crime and Corruption Act for the tabling of CCC reports to ensure the decision to table the report rests solely with the CCC. Under the bill, a signed commission report must be given simultaneously to the chair of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee, the Attorney-General as the minister responsible for the Crime and Corruption Act, and the Speaker. The Speaker is then required to table the report in the Legislative Assembly on the next sitting day after the Speaker receives the report. Where the Legislative Assembly is not sitting, the Speaker must deliver the report to the Clerk of the Parliament, who must authorise its publication.

I turn now to the situation with respect to the CCC's past public reports and statements. The bill makes it clear that all past reports and public statements of the CCC are valid. This extends to any action taken by the CCC in relation to the report or public statement, including any preparation work undertaken by CCC officers. There is no requirement for these reports or statements to have complied with the new criteria set out in the bill or the enhanced procedural fairness requirements. They are validated as they are in accordance with the existing framework of the Crime and Corruption Act. The former government, in its lapsed bill, chose not to retrospectively validate the work of the CCC. We know why. One reason is \$1 million for Carne; another reason is nearly \$400,000 for Trad. That is why.

**Mr Janetzki:** Unbelievable!

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Unbelievable! I will take that interjection. We are doing this because we believe in integrity in government and the need for transparency for Queenslanders. Those opposite should hang their heads in shame.


**Mr McDonald:** They had a chance.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** They did have a chance. I will take that interjection. It is incredible they had to be dragged kicking and screaming to this place today. It will be interesting to see how they end up voting on this bill.

The bill also contains measures to improve the operational efficiency of the CCC, measures relating to the engagement of agents and requirements for notices issued electronically. These measures are very minor technical amendments but will go a long way to assisting the CCC in its day-to-day operations.

I am extraordinarily proud to have been appointed the Attorney-General in the Crisafulli government. I am proud to be a member of a government that honours its election commitments. Today this bill delivers another important milestone and an important deliverable under my ministerial charter letter. We have taken a vital step to promptly restore reporting powers to the CCC. As Attorney-General and Minister for Integrity, I stand in complete support of transparency in relation to the way the CCC performs its work on corruption risks. Nothing could better underscore the need for this legislation than the revelations made in the House yesterday. With this bill, the CCC should be equipped with all of the tools it needs to raise standards and conduct across the public sector, which is foundational to our integrity landscape. I commend the bill to the House.

## First Reading

 **Hon. DK FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity) (3.20 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.


Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

## Referral to Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Lister): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee.

## Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

 **Hon. DK FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity) (3.20 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, under the provisions of standing order 136, the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee report to the House on the Crime and Corruption (Restoring Reporting Powers) Amendment Bill by Friday, 11 April 2025.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.