




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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JUSTICE, INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (3.42 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the committee report on the oversight of the Integrity Commissioner. As a member of the PCCC, which obviously has nothing to do with this report, I place on the public record that I deeply appreciate the importance of the work that the Integrity Commissioner and her team do. They provide crucial integrity and transparency services to Queensland.

As we have heard people talk about today, transparency is a cornerstone of trust in the Public Service, in the parliament and in the executive. Without this trust, the very cornerstones of democracy can begin to erode very quickly. Therefore, I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that the role and responsibilities of the Integrity Commissioner and her team are crucial in upholding our democracy for all the reasons that I have outlined. I think her role is all the more important as we move into a space where public discourse is increasingly influenced by misinformation and things like artificial intelligence. Ensuring we have these fundamental public credentials is vital. The proactive work that the Integrity Commissioner does in providing advice means that the people who seek advice do not have to rely on their own judgement and own guesswork. There is a strong and consistent set of guidelines that people seeking advice can trust and so can Queenslanders.

Like many members of this House, I have personal experience with seeking advice from the Integrity Commissioner. As a member of parliament and a member of the community, I place on record my appreciation for the work of the Integrity Commissioner and her team. It is important work. I think we can see from the increase in requests for information from her office that they will need to continue to receive appropriate resourcing.

Other members have referenced the number of requests for advice, which continue to go up. They have received 122 formal requests from a designated person for advice on ethics, integrity issues or interest issues. That is an increase of 56. That is a substantial jump. They have finalised 115 formal written advice requests. The report notes that ministers and assistant ministers were the largest category of designated persons seeking advice, followed by statutory office holders, directors-general and ministerial advisers. About 85 per cent of advice requests—I think we could probably say the overwhelming majority—concerned a conflict of interest. Of those requests, the majority related to personal interests. Also in demand was advice concerning ethics or integrity matters, including recruitment or procurement processes. Sensitive information was also an area of interest, among other issues.

It is important to note, and very commendable, that the annual report states that 77 per cent of the advice requests were finalised within 10 business days. That means that people seeking advice, which can often be an anxious time, were getting that advice very quickly. The committee report notes that if a matter took longer it was often because it was a complex matter and required additional advice and consideration.

I mentioned that I have personal experience with seeking advice, like many members of this House. The member for Maiwar mentioned that he has also sought advice from the Integrity Commissioner. When I was elected to parliament members will know that I was a single parent. I met my husband in Parliament House. We had to seek advice from the Integrity Commissioner when that occurred. It was important to me that I sought that advice early so that I understood my responsibilities. This was very much a new realm for me. Even all these years later I remember being very nervous to ask for that advice. I am not sure why, but I was pleased that I got that advice early on so that I could get a clear understanding of my rights and obligations. I think that nervousness sprung from the fact that I valued my relationship.

As one of many members who has sought advice from the Integrity Commissioner, my view, formed from that experience, is that asking for advice early always leads to the best outcome. It means that you and all Queenslanders can be confident that you are carrying out your role with integrity.

(Time expired)