




Speech By
Martin Hunt

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Record of Proceedings, 29 April 2025

CRIME AND CORRUPTION (RESTORING REPORTING POWERS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HUNT** (Nicklin—LNP) (3.12 pm): I rise as chair of the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee to speak in strong support of the Crime and Corruption (Restoring Reporting Powers) Amendment Bill 2025 and the amendments as put forward by the Attorney-General. I want to place on record my thanks to the committee members and the secretariat. We have indeed been a very busy committee and the secretariat has been outstanding in its assistance in ensuring our reporting timeframes to the House are met, and I thank it for that.

This bill is an important milestone. It restores to the Crime and Corruption Commission the powers it needs to uphold integrity in Queensland—powers that had been weakened by a combination of legal rulings and political gamesmanship by the former Labor government. It also fulfils a core election commitment made by the Crisafulli government to restore transparency, accountability and integrity to our public institutions. Queenslanders voted for change. They voted for openness. They voted for an end to the culture of secrecy that had taken hold under the Palaszczuk-Miles government. This bill is a direct response to that call. It ensures that never again can a government hide important CCC findings and the truth from the people of Queensland who deserve to know.

The committee received 11 submissions from key stakeholders including the CCC, Queensland Law Society and other legal experts and also heard evidence at public briefings and hearings and considered detailed material provided by the Department of Justice. Many stakeholders recognised the urgent need to restore the CCC's public reporting powers in a way that balances transparency with individual rights. Importantly, the CCC itself supported the bill, noting that restoring its ability to report publicly was vital to maintain public confidence in Queensland's anti-corruption framework. After thorough consideration, the committee made one recommendation, and that is that the bill be passed.

The bill strikes an appropriate balance between empowering the CCC to act and protecting individual rights through strong procedural fairness measures. This bill responds to serious failures under the former Labor government. We know that Labor fought tooth and nail to keep reports into misconduct by senior officials hidden from the public. It spent taxpayers' money to mount legal battles aimed at suppressing the truth. Most notably, the CCC reports into former deputy premier Jackie Trad and former public trustee Peter Carne were withheld from public release for years. Jackie Trad was found by the CCC to have inappropriately interfered in the recruitment of the Under Treasurer, applying aggressive pressure to change the outcome of a merit-based process. Peter Carne, meanwhile, was reported to have presided over a workplace where serious allegations including drunkenness, harassment of staff and misuse of public resources occurred. Rather than confronting these findings honestly, the former Labor government tried to bury them. Jackie Trad herself launched Supreme Court proceedings to prevent the release of the report into her actions. It was only the election of the Crisafulli government that finally brought these reports into the public domain, as we had promised the people of Queensland we would do. The public has a right to know when corruption risks arise in government. This bill ensures that right is protected going forward.

The bill restores and strengthens the CCC's role in a number of ways. Firstly, the bill grants the CCC an explicit power to report publicly about corruption investigations at any time. This corrects the uncertainty created by the High Court's 2023 decision in *Crime and Corruption Commission v Carne* which found that the CCC lacked clear authority to publish investigation reports under the Crime and Corruption Act. The CCC will now have a firm legal foundation for releasing reports, media statements or updates when it considers it appropriate. Of course, with power comes responsibility. That is why the bill introduces a clear, robust set of criteria that the CCC must consider before releasing information. These include weighing the public interest in disclosure against potential harm to individuals, risks to ongoing proceedings and other relevant factors. The safeguards ensure that the CCC's actions will be principled, fair and responsive to each individual case without handcuffing the commission's ability to inform the public when necessary.

The bill also contains enhanced existing procedural fairness requirements. Where a person may be subject to adverse comment in a CCC report, they must be notified and provided with relevant material and given a fair opportunity to respond. Clear timeframes are set and the right to seek review by the Supreme Court is enshrined, ensuring that individual rights are respected without compromising the commission's efficiency.

The bill also fixes an important structural weakness. Previously the tabling of CCC reports required political approval via the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee. This introduced the risk of political interference. The new process requires that CCC reports go directly to the Speaker, the Attorney-General and the PCCC chair. The Speaker must then table the report on the next sitting day, ensuring transparency and respecting the CCC's independence.

Finally, the bill validates all past CCC reports and public statements, removing any uncertainty caused by the High Court's ruling. This ensures that reports into the actions of figures such as Jackie Trad and Peter Carne remain publicly accessible and beyond legal challenge. Queenslanders will be able to read those reports and any others, secure in the knowledge that their validity is guaranteed.

This bill presents a sharp contrast in values between this government and the one that came before it. While Labor hid CCC findings, we are enshrining openness in law. While Labor fought to keep the public in the dark, we are legislating for the public's right to know. Labor's legacy was secrecy; the Crisafulli government's legacy will be accountability. We believe that Queenslanders deserve nothing less than the full truth, even when it is politically inconvenient—especially when it is politically inconvenient. We believe integrity in public office is non-negotiable and we believe that sunlight is the best disinfectant.

The Crime and Corruption (Restoring Reporting Powers) Amendment Bill 2025 restores the CCC's ability to do what it was always intended to do—that is, to independently investigate corruption, to report fearlessly and to uphold public trust in our institutions. It gives the commission clear authority, appropriate safeguards, stronger procedural fairness protections and absolute independence from political interference. It validates past reports, it protects Queenslanders' right to know and it ensures that the cover-ups of the past cannot be repeated. This bill is a victory for transparency, a victory for integrity and, above all, a victory for the people of Queensland. I commend the bill and the amendments to the House.