



**QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT**  
Ethics Committee

**REPORT NO. 232, 57TH PARLIAMENT**

**Matter of privilege referred by the Speaker on  
7 June 2024 relating to an allegation of publishing a false  
or misleading account of proceedings of the House**

**September 2024**

## Ethics Committee

<b>Chair</b>	Hon Stirling Hinchliffe MP, Member for Sandgate
<b>Deputy Chair</b>	Mr Andrew Powell MP, Member for Glass House
<b>Members</b>	Mr John-Paul Langbroek MP, Member for Surfers Paradise
	Mr Linus Power MP, Member for Logan
	Ms Kim Richards MP, Member for Redlands
	Mr Ray Stevens MP, Member for Mermaid Beach

## Functions and procedures

The Ethics Committee (the committee) is a statutory committee of the Queensland Parliament established under section 102 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*. The committee of the 57<sup>th</sup> Parliament was appointed by resolution of the Legislative Assembly on 26 November 2020.

The committee's area of responsibility includes dealing with complaints about the ethical conduct of particular members and dealing with alleged breaches of parliamentary privilege by members of the Assembly and other persons. The committee considers and reports on matters of privilege and possible contempts of parliament referred to it internally by the Speaker, the Registrar, a committee, or the House. This is an important element of the Parliament's exclusive cognisance over its own affairs, which enables it to fulfil its functions.

The committee has established procedures and practices for dealing with referrals which ensure procedural fairness and natural justice is afforded to all parties. These procedures are set out in chapters 44 and 45 of Standing Orders. The committee is also bound by the instructions regarding witnesses contained in Schedule 3 of the Standing Orders.

The committee applies the civil standard of proof, on the balance of probabilities, in making a finding of contempt. This is a lower standard than the 'beyond reasonable doubt' standard required for criminal matters. However, proof of a very high order is required to make a finding of contempt, consistent with the test applied in relation to misconduct charges at common law.

### Committee Secretariat

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Note: All web address references are current at the time of publishing.

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. This report concerns an allegation that the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women, Hon Shannon Fentiman MP (the Minister) published a false or misleading account of proceedings of the House on various social media platforms.
2. On 22 May 2024, the Minister posted an extract of the broadcast of proceedings on various social media pages. The extract showed the Minister being interrupted by the member for Mudgeeraba, Ms Ros Bates MP (the member) while answering a Question without Notice regarding the provision of maternity services.
3. The member subsequently made a complaint to the Speaker, alleging that the post did not provide enough context and was a false and misleading account of proceedings.
4. On 7 June 2024, the Speaker tabled a ruling on the matter and stated:

*I have carefully considered the material put forward by both the Member and the Minister. I have reached the view that there is an arguable case that the published shortened extract of the proceedings, in the absence of the full context of the question asked, could have been potentially misleading.*
5. On 11 June 2024, the committee received a written referral from the Speaker.
6. The relevant social media posts have since been removed.

## CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

7. Section 37 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* (the POQA) defines the meaning of ‘contempt’ of the Assembly as follows:

(1) *“Contempt” of the Assembly means a breach or disobedience of the powers, rights or immunities, or a contempt, of the Assembly or its members or committees.*

(2) *Conduct, including words, is not contempt of the Assembly unless it amounts, or is intended or likely to amount, to an improper interference with—*

(a) *the free exercise by the Assembly or a committee of its authority or functions; or*

(b) *the free performance by a member of the member’s duties as a member.*
8. Standing Order 266(13) provides that an example of a contempt is:

*Publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings before the House or a committee.*
9. The Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions<sup>1</sup> provide:

*The Legislative Assembly authorises the further publication of this broadcast of the proceedings of the Queensland Parliament, subject to the following conditions:*

...

*3. Excerpts of proceedings are to be placed in context so as to avoid any misrepresentation.*
10. Section 49 of the POQA defines a ‘parliamentary record’ as including a record of proceedings in the Assembly; and it may be in any form. The Act provides an example: ‘The record may be in audio or visual form and last only a short time’.
11. Section 58 of the POQA provides:

(1) *The Assembly may at any time impose conditions on the publication of a parliamentary record.*

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<sup>1</sup> Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions: <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-the-Assembly/Live-and-Archived-Broadcasts/Terms-and-Conditions>.

*(2) It does not matter whether the parliamentary record has been previously published or whether the Assembly authorises or has authorised the publication.*

*Example— Assume an audio or visual record of proceedings in the Assembly is published on the internet by an authorised publisher under section 51. The Assembly may impose conditions on the publication by the authorised publisher. The Assembly may also impose conditions on the publication by a person who has accessed the internet publication of a parliamentary record derived from that access.*

*(3) Publication of a parliamentary record in contravention of a condition imposed by the Assembly is a contempt of the Assembly.*

12. The committee determined that the publication of the excerpt of proceedings could fall within two different contempts. First, as a breach of SO 266(13) and second as a contravention of the Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions in accordance with s 58(3) of the POQA.

13. The committee has not previously considered a contempt under SO 266(13). Therefore, the committee extrapolated the following elements from the standing orders and POQA:

**Element 1:** Has the Minister published an account of proceedings of the House?

**Element 2:** Was that account of proceedings false or misleading?

**Element 3:** Did the publishing of the false and misleading proceedings amount, or was intended or likely to amount, to an improper interference with the free exercise by the Assembly or a committee of its authority or functions; or the free performance by a member of the member's duties as a member?

14. The committee has previously considered a breach of the broadcast conditions in Report No. 157<sup>2</sup> and Report No. 181.<sup>3</sup>

15. Report No. 157 concerned the use of the broadcast of proceedings by the Together Union in an advertisement. The committee determined that the advertisement did not breach the Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions, and as such, there was no contempt.

16. Report No. 181 concerned the use of the broadcast of proceedings by Ms Dee Madigan. In a video posted to her social media account she included footage of the member for Kawana with the words 'toddler tantrum' captioned. In that matter, the committee found that Ms Madigan had breached the Broadcast Terms and Conditions and as such, a contempt had been committed.

17. Based on those precedents, the committee applied the following elements in order to assess whether a contempt could be found under s 58(3) of the POQA:

**Element 1:** Was there a publication of a parliamentary record by the Minister?

**Element 2:** Was that publication in contravention of a condition imposed by the Assembly?

18. The relevant condition being, '3. Excerpts of proceedings are to be placed in context so as to avoid any misrepresentation.'

## THE COMMITTEE'S PROCEEDINGS

19. The committee has established procedures and practices for dealing with referrals which ensure procedural fairness is afforded to all parties. These procedures are set out in chapters 44 and 45 of Standing Orders.

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<sup>2</sup> Ethics Committee, Report No. 157, 55<sup>th</sup> Parliament, Matter of Privilege referred by the Speaker on 16 December 2024 relating to an alleged use of the Broadcast of the Proceedings of the Queensland Parliament in contradiction of the terms and conditions.

<sup>3</sup> Ethics Committee, Report No. 181, 56<sup>th</sup> Parliament, Inquiry into matters relating to a Matter of Privilege referred by the Speaker on 15 June 2018 relating to a breach of the Broadcast Terms and Conditions.

20. On 14 June 2024, the committee wrote to the Minister to provide her with the opportunity to respond to the allegations in writing. The Minister responded via her barrister, Ms Ruth O’Gorman KC on 12 July 2024 after requesting, and being provided, an extension by the committee.
21. On 14 June 2024, the committee also wrote to the member to provide her with the opportunity to provide any further information in addition to her initial letter to the Speaker. The member did not provide a further response.
22. On 14 June 2024, the committee also wrote to Mr Neil Laurie, Clerk of the Parliament seeking further information. The Clerk provided a response on 26 June 2024.
23. The Clerk’s submission provided an unofficial transcript of proceedings which included a number of interjections that did not form the official record of proceedings. There were interjections attributed to the member for Glass House, Mr Andrew Powell MP. The member for Glass House declared a potential conflict of interest pursuant to Standing Order 272. However, the committee determined that a conflict of interest did not arise, and it was not necessary to replace the member for the consideration of this matter.

## **CONSIDERATION**

### **Possible contempt under Standing Order 266(13)**

#### ***Element 1: Has the Minister published an account of proceedings of the House?***

24. On 22 May 2024, the Minister posted an extract from the broadcast of proceedings on various social media pages regarding a response to an answer to question without notice relating to maternity services.
25. In the first post, an interjection from the member for Mudgeeraba was incorrectly captioned as the member stating, ‘close your legs’.
26. After being informed that the captioning was incorrect, the Minister replaced the post with a correct caption reflecting the record of proceedings. The member’s interjection was, ‘cross your legs’.
27. It is not contested that Minister Fentiman published an account of proceedings of the House on both occasions.
28. The committee determined that the first element is satisfied.

#### ***Element 2: Was that account of proceedings false or misleading?***

29. The Minister’s first post with incorrect captioning was clearly false. However, the issue was quickly rectified once it was brought to the Minister’s attention. The committee considered that this error was a technical contempt, however it has not assessed the initial post any further.
30. The committee’s subsequent examination is with respect to the second, correctly captioned post.
31. The committee determined that the second post was not ‘false’ and it reflected the proceedings in the House as per Parliament’s official archived broadcast.<sup>4</sup>
32. The key issue for the committee to determine was whether the account of proceedings was misleading.
33. The Standing Orders do not define ‘misleading’ therefore the committee assessed its ordinary meaning. The Macquarie Dictionary defines ‘mislead’ as ‘to lead or guide wrongly; lead astray’.
34. The Minister’s submission by Ms O’Gorman KC stated that the Minister posted the related extract of the broadcast of proceedings of the following exchange in the House on 22 May 2024.

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<sup>4</sup> Broadcast of Proceedings, 22 May 2024: <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-the-Assembly/Live-and-Archived-Broadcasts/video-on-demand/player/beeb8e20e55144ebadcb72d7bae57af?t=00%3A51%3A04>.

*Ms FENTIMAN: Mr Speaker, can I say all of those mums—*

*Ms BATES: Cross your legs!*

*Mr SPEAKER: Member for Mudgeeraba, you are warned under the standing orders. I ask you to withdraw that comment.*

*Ms BATES: I withdraw.*

35. The video was accompanied by the following caption:

*This is what the LNP Shadow Minister for Health and Women Ros Bates yelled whilst I was on my feet talking about women's health and maternity services in Parliament today.*

36. The member for Mudgeeraba argued that the extract published by the Minister lacked context:

*In the course of the minister's response to a question from the Member for Scenic Rim, I interjected that it appeared the only solution the government offered to declining services was that expectant mothers cross their legs as a means of preventing births occurring.*

*Clearly, this was not meant as a practical medical option but as an example of one of the few solutions the government offered – as impractical as it is.*

37. In response to the allegation, the Minister stated:

*The assertions made by the Member for Mudgeeraba are not a true or accurate representation of the recording of proceedings that occurred on 22 May 2024 and the answers I provided to the questions on maternity services in Queensland.*

*As an experienced and senior politician, she made the decision to interject in the manner that she did, when I was answering a question, and that should be able to be viewed by the public on social media.*

38. The Minister's submission provided by Ms O'Gorman KC argued that the post was not misleading and that the video demonstrated exactly what the Minister included in the caption – that is, the Minister was interrupted by the interjection when she was answering a question during Question Time.

39. Further, Ms O'Gorman KC stated that the post accurately demonstrated that the member's conduct was disrespectful and disorderly and that therefore, the criticism was warranted.

40. The fact that the interjection was dealt with by the Speaker by warning the member and asking the member to withdraw and in the minds of some, considered worthy of public criticism, is not relevant as to whether the post was misleading.

41. The Minister noted in her submission to the Speaker that she sought and followed the advice of the Clerk.

42. The Clerk confirmed that the Minister sought his advice either in the morning or early afternoon of 22 May 2024. The Clerk recalled that the Minister showed the video to the Clerk which included captions. The Minister noted that the member's withdrawal was included to comply with the broadcast terms and conditions that – '4. Excerpts of proceedings which are subsequently withdrawn may be rebroadcast only if the withdrawal is also rebroadcast'.

43. The Clerk advised that he expressed concern that the video may not comply with the condition that 'excerpts of proceedings are to be placed in context to avoid any misrepresentation' because it did not include the question and exchanges before the clip.

44. The Minister advised the Clerk that she would include context in the main message and that the video clip with the interjection and withdrawal included provided context. The Clerk also noted that he expressed doubt as to whether this would be sufficient and advised that the Minister may have to withdraw the clip if there was a complaint about context.

45. After the posts by the Minister and the receipt of complaints by the Speaker, the Clerk had the following text message exchange with the Minister:

*Clerk: Minister can you please take down your posts with video from today. It currently says in captions "close" rather than "cross" legs. Hansard has confirmed "cross" words used. (4:46pm)*

*Clerk: As stands misrepresentation of record. (4:46pm)*

*Minister: Yes will change it (5:02pm)*

*Clerk: If replacing it need to look at length and context. It is difficult given all the interjections but as cut does not put within context of maternity (5:04pm)*

*Minister: I'm happy to make the clip longer but before that part of the video it's me saying I can't get a word in and her interjection stands alone. (5:08pm)*

*Clerk: I know it is a very difficult one to clip because of the interjections but the argument is that without the question there is no context to the issue re maternity (5:33pm)*

*Clerk: I hate being the thought police (5:33pm)*

*Minister: The question has nothing to do with advice for mums so there is no context to be found- I'm reposting with correct captions - so as not to offend the standing orders - not misleading or ridicule (5:37pm)*

*Clerk: Ok - I have done my job - be over to Speaker (5:42pm)*

46. The committee deliberated on this element for a lengthy period of time. It was a difficult element for the committee to consider as the assessment is largely subjective.
47. On the one hand, there is an argument that the Minister simply republished an exact extract of the record of proceedings accompanied by a caption explaining that the member interrupted her whilst she was talking about women's health and maternity services in Parliament. The caption itself provided context and therefore, the post is not misleading.
48. However, on the other hand, there is an argument that by publishing a short extract of the proceedings (which included surprised and concerned expressions on members' faces) accompanied by a broad caption that did not include the specifics of the question would lead a reasonable person to wrongly believe that the member's interjection was directed personally towards the Minister.
49. The committee considered that reasonable minds could differ when determining if appropriate context was provided.
50. The committee was also provided with an unofficial transcript of proceedings which included multiple interjections that occurred around the time that the member for Mudgeeraba interjected. The Clerk informed the committee that these interjections do not form part of the official record of proceedings under the rules for Hansard.<sup>5</sup>
51. The committee notes that the following exchange is based on the unofficial transcript and the interjections attributed to certain members are not verified. The committee is including the information in order to provide further context to the relevant exchange:

*Mr KRAUSE: My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister confirm that Beaudesert Hospital's maternity unit was bypassed almost every week across December, January and February, with patients being referred to Logan Hospital? Why didn't the Minister tell the mums of Beaudesert about the bypass happening on her watch?*

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<sup>5</sup> The Record of Proceedings only includes interjections that are responded to or those that are subject of warning and/or withdrawal.

*Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. It is very pleasing that we do have birthing services back at Beaudesert, as I said. Particularly over the Christmas period, there are very small amounts of time where sometimes staff absences mean—*

*Powell: Months*

*Opposition members: Every week.*

*Simpson: Every week for months.*

*Gerber: Three months.*

*Powell: For three months.*

*Opposition members interjected.*

*Mr SPEAKER: Order!*

*Ms FENTIMAN: Over the Christmas period there are times when staff take leave, but we work with the patients. The hardworking staff do deserve a break at Christmas time and we work with local mothers to make sure they are supported.*

*Powell: Long Christmas.*

*Bates: That counts January-February.*

*Crisafulli: And the community weren't told.*

*Minnikin: Oh, what in January and February.*

*Crisafulli: Resource the systems.*

*Bates: Bypass. Bypass the \*\*\**

*Crisafulli: And trying to cover it up.*

*Bleijie: Hold the birth for a couple of months until they come back from leave.*

*Opposition members interjected.*

*Ms FENTIMAN: If I can get a word in, Mr Speaker, can I say that all of those mums—*

*Ms Bates: Cross your legs!*

*Mr SPEAKER: Member for Mudgeeraba, you are warned under the standing orders. I ask you to withdraw that comment.*

*Ms BATES: I withdraw.*

52. It appeared that the member for Mudgeeraba was responding to the member for Kawana's interjection.
53. However, the committee determined that while the further interjections might provide context to the committee, this information was not available to the Minister at the time of the posts, nor was there any evidence that she heard the member for Kawana's interjection. The committee therefore did not rely upon this information when considering this element.
54. The committee could not determine that the Minister's second post was misleading. Accordingly, the second element is not satisfied.

***Element 3: Did the publishing of the false and misleading proceedings amount, or was intended or likely to amount, to an improper interference with the free exercise by the Assembly of its authority or functions; or the free performance by a member of the member's duties as a member?***

55. The committee did not need to consider this element as the second element was not satisfied.



## Contempt in accordance with s 58(3) of the POQA

### **Element 1: Was there a publication of a parliamentary record by the Minister?**

56. Section 49 of the POQA defines parliamentary record:

*(1) A parliamentary record is a record relating to proceedings in the Assembly.*

*(2) A record relating to proceedings in the Assembly includes a record of proceedings in the Assembly.*

*(3) The record may be—*

*(a) in any form; or*

*(b) permanent or otherwise; or*

*(c) made at the same time as the proceedings to which it relates or otherwise. Example—  
The record may be in audio or visual form and last only a short time*

57. It is clear both from this definition, and the precedent in Report No. 181, that the broadcast of proceedings falls within the definition of a parliamentary record.

58. The Minister published the record of proceedings on various social media platforms on two occasions, the first and the second post.

59. Therefore, the committee determined that this element was satisfied with respect to both posts.

### **Element 2: Was that publication in contravention of a condition imposed by the Assembly?**

60. Section 58 of the POQA provides that the Legislative Assembly may, at any time, impose conditions on the publication of a parliamentary record, including the broadcast of proceedings of Parliament. Any such conditions apply regardless of whether the parliamentary record has been published previously or whether the Assembly authorises or has authorised the publication.

61. An example provided at s 58(2) is:

*Assume an audio or visual record of proceedings in the Assembly is published on the internet by an authorised publisher under section 51. The Assembly may impose conditions on the publication by the authorised publisher. The Assembly may also impose conditions on the publication by a person who has accessed the internet publication of a parliamentary record derived from that access.*

62. The current Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions were agreed to in the Assembly on 12 November 2015.<sup>6</sup>

63. Based on this statutory definition and example, the Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions are 'a condition imposed by the Assembly'. The Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions state:

*The Legislative Assembly authorises the further publication of this broadcast of the proceedings of the Queensland Parliament, subject to the following conditions:*

...

*3. Excerpts of proceedings are to be placed in context so as to avoid any misrepresentation.*

64. The key question for the committee to determine was whether the published extracts required additional context to avoid misrepresentation.

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<sup>6</sup> Record of Proceedings, 12 November 2015, pp 2830-2831.

65. The terms and conditions do not define misrepresentation, therefore the committee considered its ordinary meaning.
66. The Macquarie Dictionary defines ‘misrepresent’ as:<sup>7</sup>  
*to represent incorrectly, improperly, or falsely.*
67. It is clear that the Minister’s first post included an incorrect caption which resulted in an incorrect representation of the proceedings of the House. The committee determined that this was a technical contempt. The post was quickly amended to include the correct caption.
68. The committee deliberated on this element with respect to the second post for a significant amount of time. As detailed in the above consideration, the committee found this element difficult to establish given the assessment is largely subjective.
69. The member for Mudgeeraba stated to the Speaker:  
*During Question Time today the Minister responded to a number of questions on the poor state of maternity services in parts of Queensland.*  
*In the course of the minister’s response to a question from the Member for Scenic Rim, I interjected that it appeared the only solution the government offered to declining services was that expectant mothers cross their legs as a means of preventing births occurring.*  
*Clearly, this was not meant as a practical medical option but as an example of one of the few solutions the government offered – as impractical as it is.*  
*In her Facebook post the minister, through a selective editing of the record of proceedings, has implied that my interjection was an attack on women. The Hansard shows the true context was in relation to pregnant women having to hold on due to hospital bypass. While the Facebook post was deleted a second Facebook post was uploaded by the minister which still offends the standing orders.*
70. The Minister also stated to the Speaker:  
*... the Member for Mudgeeraba says that this is a false and misleading account of the proceedings. The Member for Mudgeeraba asserts that she:*  
*interjected that it appeared the only solution the government offered to declining services was that expectant mothers cross their legs as a means of preventing births occurring.*  
*Hansard shows that assertion to be untrue. The Member did not say the words she asserts in her letter, or even words to that effect. Rather, she simply yelled ‘cross your legs’ across the floor of the House.*  
*The assertions made by the Member for Mudgeeraba are not a true or accurate representation of the recording of proceedings that occurred on 22 May 2024 and the answers I provided to the questions on maternity services in Queensland.*  
*As an experienced and senior politician, she made the decision to interject in the manner that she did, when I was answering a question, and that should be able to be viewed by the public on social media.*  
 ...  
*It is my submission that the publication referred to by the Member for Mudgeeraba is not a false or misleading account of the proceedings, and on the contrary is a fair and accurate portrayal of the interaction that occurred.*

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<sup>7</sup> Macquarie Dictionary Online:  
[https://app.macquariedictionary.com.au/?search\\_word\\_type=dictionary&word=misrepresent%20](https://app.macquariedictionary.com.au/?search_word_type=dictionary&word=misrepresent%20).

...

*As Hansard demonstrates, the video I posted was real and depicted the interaction that had happened in Parliament on 22 May 2024.*

71. Ms O’Gorman KC stated that the member for Mudgeeraba’s assertion that ‘the interjection was an attack on women’ is baseless and that the posted video and caption does not support such an implication.
72. Ms O’Gorman KC also stated that the post depicts the Minister on her feet, speaking in Parliament, and it depicts the interjection by the member which was, in Ms O’Gorman’s KC’s words, disrespectful and disorderly. Further:

*Taken together, the video and the caption amount to a clear criticism of the Member’s conduct. No further context was required and no misrepresentation was occasioned by the publishing of the short excerpt.*
73. Ms O’Gorman KC stated that inclusion of the question without notice would have only highlighted that the Minister was being ‘hampered by excessive interjections’ and in this way, further context would have shown the member’s interjection did not occur out of the blue, but against the background of earlier, repeated interjections.
74. On the one hand, a reasonable person may consider that the Minister’s post reflected what occurred. That is, the Minister was answering a question on maternity services when the member interjected by saying ‘cross your legs’. On the other hand, a reasonable person may have interpreted that the member for Mudgeeraba’s interjection was directed personally towards the Minister.
75. Whichever view is taken, posts on social media will elicit a wide variety of responses which cannot be controlled by the person who makes the post. For this reason, members of parliament need to exercise a higher duty of care for posts on social media. The committee has addressed this issue further below.
76. Ultimately, the committee determined that this element could not be established.

## **Conclusion**

77. With respect to the Minister’s first post including an incorrect caption, the committee found this to be a technical contempt. As soon as the Minister was alerted to the incorrect captioning, the post was replaced with the correct captioning.
78. With respect to the Minister’s second post, the committee could not determine all of the necessary elements in order to establish a contempt.

## **COMMITTEE COMMENTS**

### **Social media use**

79. Members of parliament have multiple competing duties, that is, to ascertain the views of their electorate, explain and account for their decisions and inform people so that they can make informed judgements on relevant matters. Social media is a powerful tool to assist members with such duties. However, members need to use social media responsibly, particularly in a society that is highly cognisant of social media impacts and harm.
80. The Minister’s use of social media to reflect the proceedings of the House in this matter was arguably unbecoming for a Minister of the Crown. The committee did not make a finding of contempt in relation to the Minister’s second post, however, it is of the strong opinion that the Minister’s conduct was not appropriate. The committee acknowledges that the post has been removed.
81. The member for Mudgeeraba was subject to much criticism and vitriol following the Minister’s posts. The member’s interjection was dealt with by the Speaker in the House at the time. That is where the

matter should have ended. One member's disorderly conduct in the Chamber does not provide a licence for another member to further prosecute the issue.

82. Whilst no member can control the public commentary on social media, this arguably places a higher duty of care on members for their social media posts. Members should not be tempted by the benefits of disseminating information widely and rapidly through social media without considering any potential harm or liability for public comments on their social media pages.
83. The committee has previously made a recommendation to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly to amend the Guide to the Code of Ethical Standards for members to include being respectful to other members of parliament.<sup>8</sup> The committee reiterates its earlier recommendation and warns members that it will take a dim view of similar conduct in the future.

### **Process for considering complaints**

84. The current Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions were agreed to by the Legislative Assembly in 2015. Since that time there have been vast changes to the social media landscape and the way it is used by members. As such, the committee recommends that the terms and conditions be reviewed by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly (CLA) as a matter of urgency.
85. Further, the committee notes the increase in complaints relating to the republication of excerpts of the broadcast of proceedings on social media and the difficulties in attempts to resolve such complaints informally.
86. Therefore, the committee also recommends that the CLA review the process for dealing with complaints about possible breaches of the broadcast terms and conditions.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

87. The committee recommends:
  - (1) that the House take no further action in relation to this matter, and
  - (2) that the Committee of the Legislative Assembly:
    - (a) review the Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions to reflect the use of social media by members of Parliament, and
    - (b) review the complaints process for dealing with potential breaches of the Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions.



Hon Stirling Hinchliffe MP  
**Chair**

September 2024

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<sup>8</sup> See Report No. 225, 57<sup>th</sup> Parliament, Matter of privilege referred by the Speaker on 5 March 2024 regarding the spying of a member's phone in the Chamber, p 9.

## **ETHICS COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS**

Standing Order 211B(3) provides that when the Ethics Committee makes its final report to the House on a matter, the committee shall at the same time, table in the House:

- (a) The minutes of its proceedings relevant to the matter; and
- (b) Any submissions received or evidence taken in respect of the matter (including transcripts of hearings) unless the committee resolves that some or all of its proceedings remain confidential.

The relevant minutes and evidence in respect of this matter are attached to this report. Duplicated attachments have been removed.



## **Ethics Committee**

Meeting No. 65  
Friday, 14 June 2024, 8:30am  
Committee Room 3, Parliamentary Annexe

**Present**

Hon Stirling Hinchliffe MP, Chair  
Mr Andrew Powell MP, Deputy Chair  
Mr John-Paul Langbroek MP  
Mr Linus Power MP  
Ms Kim Richards MP  
Mr Ray Stevens MP (from 8:31am)

**In attendance**

Ms Erin Hastie, Committee Secretary  
Ms Alethea Briggs, Acting Executive Secretary, Office of the Deputy Clerk

### **Inquiry 18 – Matter of privilege referred by the Speaker on 7 June 2024 relating to an allegation of publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings of the House**

The secretariat's briefing and draft letters were circulated prior to the meeting.

Discussion ensued.

#### Resolved

That the committee further consider the matter and write to:

- the Minister seeking a written submission in response to the allegation under Standing Order 270(1)(b) in the terms of the draft letter provided
- the member for Mudgeeraba seeking further information under Standing Order 270(1)(d) in the terms of the draft letter provided, and
- the Clerk of the Parliament requesting he provide the committee with the advice that he provided to the Minister under Standing Order 270(1)(d).

Moved: Mr Stevens

**EXTRACT OF MINUTES –**

**MATTER OF PRIVILEGE REFERRED BY THE SPEAKER ON 7 JUNE 2024 RELATING TO AN ALLEGATION OF PUBLISHING A FALSE OR MISLEADING ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE**



**Ethics Committee**

Meeting No. 68  
Wednesday, 21 August 2024, 1.22pm  
Committee Room 3, Parliamentary Annexe

- Present**
- Hon Stirling Hinchliffe MP, Chair
  - Mr Andrew Powell MP, Deputy Chair
  - Mr John-Paul Langbroek MP
  - Mr Linus Power MP
  - Ms Kim Richards MP
  - Mr Ray Stevens MP
- In attendance**
- Ms Erin Hastie, Committee Secretary
  - Ms Rebecca Meehan, Legal and Compliance Officer

**Inquiry 18 – Matter of privilege referred by the Speaker on 7 June 2024 relating to an allegation of publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings of the House**

The secretariat's briefing was circulated prior to the meeting.

Discussion ensued.

Resolved

That the committee hold over this matter for further consideration.

Moved: Ms Richards

**EXTRACT OF MINUTES –**

**MATTER OF PRIVILEGE REFERRED BY THE SPEAKER ON 7 JUNE 2024 RELATING TO AN ALLEGATION OF PUBLISHING A FALSE OR MISLEADING ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE**



**Ethics Committee**

Meeting No. 69

Wednesday, 4 September 2024, 8.31am

Parliamentary Annexe, Brisbane and via teleconference

**Present**

Hon Stirling Hinchliffe MP, Chair  
Mr Andrew Powell MP, Deputy Chair  
Mr John-Paul Langbroek MP  
Mr Linus Power MP  
Ms Kim Richards MP  
Mr Ray Stevens MP

**In attendance**

Ms Erin Hastie, Committee Secretary  
Ms Rebecca Meehan, Legal and Compliance Officer

**Inquiry 18 – Matter of privilege referred by the Speaker on 7 June 2024 relating to an allegation of publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings of the House**

The secretariat's briefing was circulated prior to the meeting.

Discussion ensued.

Resolved

That the committee invite the Clerk to the next meeting of 11 September 2024 to clarify his written advice.

Moved: Mr Stevens



**EXTRACT OF MINUTES –**

**MATTER OF PRIVILEGE REFERRED BY THE SPEAKER ON 7 JUNE 2024 RELATING TO AN ALLEGATION OF PUBLISHING A FALSE OR MISLEADING ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE**



**Ethics Committee**

Meeting No. 71

Wednesday, 11 September 2024, 1.10pm  
Committee Room 3, Parliamentary Annexe

<b>Present</b>	Hon Stirling Hinchliffe MP, Chair Mr Andrew Powell MP, Deputy Chair Mr John-Paul Langbroek MP Mr Linus Power MP Ms Kim Richards MP Mr Ray Stevens MP
<b>In attendance</b>	Ms Erin Hastie, Committee Secretary Ms Rebecca Meehan, Legal and Compliance Officer Mr Neil Laurie, Clerk of the Parliament (until 1.44pm)

**Inquiry 18 – Matter of privilege referred by the Speaker on 7 June 2024 relating to an allegation of publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings of the House**

The secretariat's briefing was re-circulated prior to the meeting.

The Clerk provided an oral briefing.

Discussion ensued.

Resolved

That the committee make a finding that Minister Fentiman is not in contempt and direct the secretariat to prepare the Chair's draft report in the terms discussed.

Moved: Mr Stevens

The Clerk departed at 1.44pm.

**EXTRACT OF MINUTES –**

**MATTER OF PRIVILEGE REFERRED BY THE SPEAKER ON 7 JUNE 2024 RELATING TO AN ALLEGATION OF PUBLISHING A FALSE OR MISLEADING ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE**



**Ethics Committee**

Meeting No. 73

Wednesday, 25 September 2024, 10.30am

Sandgate Electorate Office and via teleconference

<b>Present</b>	Hon Stirling Hinchliffe MP, Chair Mr Andrew Powell MP, Deputy Chair Mr John-Paul Langbroek MP Mr Linus Power MP Ms Kim Richards MP Mr Ray Stevens MP
<b>In attendance</b>	Ms Erin Hastie, Committee Secretary Ms Rebecca Meehan, Legal and Compliance Officer

**Inquiry 18 – Matter of privilege referred by the Speaker on 7 June 2024 relating to an allegation of publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings of the House**

The Chair's draft report was circulated prior to the meeting.

Discussion ensued.

Resolved

That the committee adopts the Chair's draft report no. 232 as a report of the committee, as amended, and authorises its tabling.

Moved: Hon Hinchliffe

Resolved

That the committee authorise the tabling of the following correspondence:

- Letter dated 11 June 2024 from the Speaker
- Letter dated 14 June 2024 to the member for Mudgeeraba, without the copy of the Speaker's referral
- Letter dated 14 June 2024 to Minister Fentiman, without the copy of the Speaker's referral
- Letter dated 14 June 2024 to the Clerk, without the copy of the Speaker's referral
- Letter dated 26 June 2024 from the Clerk, and
- Letter dated 12 July 2024 from Ms O'Gorman.

Moved: Mr Powell

Extracts certified correct on 25 September 2024

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stirling'.

**Hon Stirling Hinchliffe MP  
Chair**



Your Ref:

Our Ref: 240611-OUT-Ethics Committee

11 June 2024

Hon Stirling Hinchliffe MP  
Member for Sandgate  
Chair  
Ethics Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

By Email: [Ethics@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:Ethics@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Stirling

I refer to my statement made 7 June 2024 (enclosed) in relation to the posting of a video excerpt by the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women, the Honourable Shannon Fentiman MP.

In addition to my statement, I enclose relevant correspondence.

Accordingly, I formally refer this matter to the Ethics Committee for consideration and report in accordance with Standing Order 269.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C. Pitt", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

**HON CURTIS PITT MP**  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Enc

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(MR SPEAKER)

## SPEAKER'S RULING – ALLEGED CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

MR SPEAKER           Honourable members,

On 22 May 2024, the Member for Mudgeeraba (the Member) wrote to me alleging that Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women (the Minister) published a false or misleading account of proceedings on 22 May 2024.

The matter relates to a video excerpt of the broadcast of proceedings that the Minister posted on her various social media pages on 22 May 2024. The excerpt showed the Minister being interrupted by the Member while answering a Question without Notice regarding the provision of maternity services.

The Member argued that the excerpt did not provide sufficient context and, as such, it constituted to the contempt of publishing false or misleading account of proceedings before the House as per the example in Standing Order 266(13).

I sought further information from the Minister about the allegation made against her, in accordance with Standing Order 269(5).

The Minister argued that the video was a true and unedited excerpt from the broadcast of proceedings that day.

Standing Order 269(4) requires that in considering whether such a matter should be referred to the Ethics Committee, that I should take account of the degree of importance of the

matter which has been raised and whether an adequate apology or explanation has been made in respect of the matter.

I have carefully considered the material put forward by both the Member and the Minister. I have reached the view that there is an arguable case that the published shortened extract of the proceedings, in the absence of the full context of the question asked, could have been potentially misleading.

I wish to emphasise that I have formed no view as to determination of guilt or whether there has been a breach of privilege but, rather, that there are sufficient issues in play to warrant the further consideration of the House via the Ethics Committee.

Accordingly, the matter is now referred to the Ethics Committee and I remind members that standing order 271 now applies and members should not refer to this matter in the House.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind members that Standing Order 269 sets out the process for members to follow when they wish to have a matter referred to the Ethics Committee.

In this case, the Member did not strictly comply with SO 269(2) in that she did not explicitly request that I refer the matter to the Ethics Committee, rather she requested that I take action. While I have considered the matter in this instance, I reserve the right to dismiss matters that do not comply with Standing Orders in the future.



# Ros BATES MP RN

LNP Member **for Mudgeeraba**

Shadow Minister for Health and Ambulance Services

Shadow Minister for Medical Research and Shadow Minister for Women

22 May 2024

The Hon Curtis Pitt MP  
Speaker of the Parliament

By email: [Office.oftheSpeaker@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:Office.oftheSpeaker@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Mr Speaker

I write in relation to the publishing of a false and misleading account of a parliamentary proceeding on Facebook and a breach of the rebroadcasting rules by Hon Shannon Fentiman MP, Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women.

During Question Time today the Minister responded to a number of questions on the poor state of maternity services in parts of Queensland.

In the course of the minister's response to a question from the Member for Scenic Rim, I interjected that it appeared the only solution the government offered to declining services was that expectant mothers cross their legs as a means of preventing births occurring.

Clearly, this was not meant as a practical medical option but as an example of one of the few solutions the government offered – as impractical as it is.

In her Facebook post the minister, through a selective editing of the record of proceedings, has implied that my interjection was an attack on women. The Hansard shows the true context was in relation to pregnant women having to hold on due to hospital bypass. While the Facebook post was deleted a second Facebook post was uploaded by the minister which still offends the standing orders

The 2nd Facebook post is available at  
<https://www.facebook.com/reel/826813362671100>

The minister's post removes context by cutting out the question and the whole answer and, in doing so, creates a misleading account of a parliamentary proceeding. This also offends the rules of the rebroadcasting of proceedings for the same reason.



# Ros BATES MP RN

LNP Member **for Mudgeeraba**

Shadow Minister for Health and Ambulance Services

Shadow Minister for Medical Research and Shadow Minister for Women

I request that action be taken to ensure that the minister is no longer able to misrepresent what occurred and I seek your assistance in having the posts removed in order to avoid an inaccurate portraying of proceedings to occur.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ros Bates".

Ros Bates MP  
Member for Mudgeeraba



Your Ref:

Our Ref: 240524-OUT-Fentiman

24 May 2024

Hon Shannon Fentiman MP

Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women

By E-mail: [health@ministerial.qld.gov.au](mailto:health@ministerial.qld.gov.au)

Dear Minister

The Office of the Speaker received correspondence on 22 May 2024 from the Member for Mudgeeraba raising a Matter of Privilege. The said matter concerns whether you have published a false or misleading account of parliamentary proceedings. A copy of this correspondence is attached.

Publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings is listed as an example of behaviour that the House may treat as a contempt (see *Standing Order 266 (13)*).

*Standing Order 269 (5)* provides that in considering whether such a matter should be referred to the Ethics Committee, the Speaker may request further information from the person the subject of the allegation. Accordingly, I am writing to you pursuant to that Standing Order.

*Standing Order 269 (4)* provides that in considering whether the matter should be referred to the Ethics Committee, the Speaker shall take account of the degree of importance of the matter which has been raised and whether an adequate apology or explanation has been made in respect of the matter.

I wish to stress that I have not yet formed a view as to whether this particular allegation should be referred to the Ethics Committee. However, as a matter of course, I remind all members who are the subject of such allegations of the long established convention that should a Member become aware they have inadvertently misled the House, they should, at the earliest opportunity, correct the record and apologise for their inadvertence.

Parliament House  
George St Brisbane Queensland 4000 Australia

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Should you wish to provide me with further information to assist me in making a determination as to whether the matter should be referred to the Ethics Committee under *Standing Order 269* please provide your response by COB 30 May 2024.

In the meantime, I ask that you consider removing the facebook post referred to in the correspondence.

Should your office have any queries relating to this matter, they may be directed to my Executive Officer, Coral-Leah Kemp, by email to [Speaker@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:Speaker@parliament.qld.gov.au) or on 07 3553 6700.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "C. Pitt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**HON CURTIS PITT MP**  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Enc.



Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance  
Services  
Minister for Women

---

1 William Street Brisbane Qld 4000  
GPO Box 48 Brisbane  
Queensland 4001 Australia  
Telephone +61 7 3035 6100

30 May 2024

The Honourable Curtis Pitt MP  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
Queensland Parliament  
2 George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Email: [speaker@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:speaker@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Mr Speaker

I refer to your letter dated 24 May 2024, providing me with an opportunity to respond, pursuant to SO 269 of the Standing Rules, to an allegation of contempt made by the Member for Mudgeeraba in a letter dated 22 May 2024. This letter is my response.

**Threshold question**

An initial, threshold question arises from the Member for Mudgeeraba's letter. To deal with that question, it is necessary to set out some of the parts of Part 10 of the Standing Rules.

Standing Order 264(b) relevantly defines the term 'matter' as '*a matter concerning the powers, rights, and immunities of the House and includes:... (b) an alleged contempt.*'

Standing Order 269 then sets out the procedure for dealing with matters which are not urgent or arising from Committee reports or the Speaker's initiative. That order relevantly provides:

*(2) A member should write to the Speaker at the earliest opportunity stating the matter and requesting that the matter be referred to the ethics committee.*

*(3) A member must formulate as precisely as possible the matter, and where a contempt is alleged, enough particulars so as to give any person against whom it is made a full opportunity to respond to the allegation.*

*(4) In considering whether the matter should be referred to the committee, the Speaker shall take account of the degree of importance of the matter which has been raised and whether an adequate apology or explanation has been made in respect of the matter. No matter should be referred to the ethics committee if the matter is technical or trivial and does not warrant the further attention of the House.*

As that extract of the order makes clear, it is necessary for a complaint about a 'matter' to be detailed and satisfy specific criteria in order to be properly characterised as raising a matter to be dealt with according to the procedure in the Standing Orders. One such criterion is the requirement that the letter request the matter be referred to the ethics committee.

The Member for Mudgeeraba's letter does not make such a request.

For that reason, on a proper construction of the Standing Orders, a ‘matter’ has not been properly notified and the procedure under SO 269 need not be followed. That is, there is no matter to be referred to the ethics committee.

Notwithstanding that position, I have nevertheless provided a substantive response to the allegations raised by the Member for Mudgeeraba’s letter in the balance of this letter. For the foregoing reasons, however, I respectfully suggest it is unnecessary that you consider it unless you disagree with the characterisation of the letter advanced above.

### **The Member for Mudgeeraba’s letter**

In her letter to you, the Member for Mudgeeraba alleges that I published a false or misleading account of parliamentary proceedings on 22 May 2024. The Member for Mudgeeraba is referring to a post I made on social media, that was taken from Question Time on 22 May 2024.

For the reasons set out below, the video published was not a false or misleading account of parliamentary proceedings and should not be treated as contempt. That is, to use the language of SO 269(6), no matter arises. Accordingly, it does not warrant further attention for the House.

Prior to dealing with the Member for Mudgeeraba’s assertion that the video is a false or misleading account of parliament, it is necessary to set out the nature of the Member’s allegation.

### **Nature of the Member’s allegation**

The Member for Mudgeeraba’s letter does not contain the transcript from *Hansard* from 22 May 2024. As set out at page 1706 of *Hansard*, the video contained the following interaction:

*Ms Fentiman: Mr Speaker, can I say that all of those mums—*

*Ms Bates: Cross your legs!*

*Mr SPEAKER: Member for Mudgeeraba, you are warned under the standing orders. I ask you to withdraw that comment.*

*Ms BATES: I withdraw.*

### **The Member’s assertions**

On page 1 of her letter, the Member for Mudgeeraba says that this is a false and misleading account of the proceedings. The Member for Mudgeeraba asserts that she:

*interjected that it appeared the only solution the government offered to declining services was that expectant mothers cross their legs as a means of preventing births occurring.*

Hansard shows that assertion to be untrue. The Member did not say the words she asserts in her letter, or even words to that effect. Rather, she simply yelled ‘cross your legs’ across the floor of the House.

The assertions made by the Member for Mudgeeraba are not a true or accurate representation of the recording of proceedings that occurred on 22 May 2024 and the answers I provided to the questions on maternity services in Queensland.

As an experienced and senior politician, she made the decision to interject in the manner that she did, when I was answering a question, and that should be able to be viewed by the public on social media.

### **Question Time On 22 May 2024**

As the Member for Mudgeeraba has indicated in her correspondences it is important to rely on Hansard and the video recording of Question Time on 22 May 2024 to give the full context of the proceedings from that day.

I have included the full transcript of the Question asked by the Member for Scenic Rim, Mr Jon Krause MP and the answers and interjections below. I respectfully encourage you to rewatch the archived broadcast of the Legislative Assembly from Question Time on 22 May 2024.<sup>3</sup> An excerpt of page 1705 to 1706 of Hansard is **attached** to this letter.

As the excerpt of Hansard shows, I was continuously interrupted by interjections from the Opposition throughout my response to the Question. The video recording of those proceedings shows that there are very few moments during my answer in which the Opposition are not loudly interjecting.

### **Contempt of Parliament**

In Queensland conduct does not constitute contempt of parliament unless it satisfies the definition in s 37(2) of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* (the **Act**):

*(1) Contempt of the Assembly means a breach or disobedience of the powers, rights or immunities, or a contempt, of the Assembly or its members or committees.*

*(2) Conduct, including words, is not contempt of the Assembly unless it amounts, or is intended or likely to amount, to an improper interference with—*

- (a) the free exercise by the Assembly or a committee of its authority or functions; or*
- (b) the free performance by a member of the member's duties as a member.*

In my respectful submission, the video posted is in no way an improper interference with the free exercise by the assembly of its authority or functions. Nor is the video an improper interference with the free performance by a member of the members duties as a member. You would not be satisfied to the requisite degree that the video is either a contempt for the purposes of s 37 of the Act or a false or misleading account of proceedings for the purposes of SO 266(13).

### **Was the publication a false or misleading account of proceedings?**

It is my submission that the publication referred to by the Member for Mudgeeraba is not a false or misleading account of the proceedings, and on the contrary is a fair and accurate portrayal of the interaction that occurred.

Consideration of what constitutes 'false or misleading' conduct, conduct synonymous with such conduct, has been the subject of substantial consideration by the courts across many different aspects of the law. The concept can be distilled down to the proposition that 'false or misleading' conduct is conduct that objectively leads a person into error, having regard to all the circumstances.

As Hansard demonstrates, the video I posted was real and depicted the interaction that had happened in Parliament on 22 May 2024.

### **Response to the Member's assertions**

The Member for Mudgeeraba in her correspondence to you has claimed that the video has been '*selectively edited*'. That is not correct and I reject entirely the suggestion that it had been edited.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-the-Assembly/Live-and-Archived-Broadcasts/video-on-demand/player/beeb8e20e55144ebadcbe72d7bae57af>

The Member for Mudgeeraba claims that the post removes context by cutting out the question and the whole answer and in doing so creates a misleading account of the parliamentary proceedings.

The social media posts were accompanied by a caption which reads:

*This is what the LNP Shadow Minister for Health and Women Ros Bates yelled while I was on my feet talking about women's health and maternity services in Parliament today.*

When I became aware that Hansard did not reflect what I thought the Member has yelled across the floor of the House, I updated the post as follows:

*Update: Rose Bates has confirmed she said "cross your legs" not "close your legs" – I think this is equally as abhorrent.*

It is my submission that the caption accompanying the post provides a clear contextual basis to the publication. I was plainly on my feet talking about women's health and maternity services in Parliament.

The Member for Mudgeeraba also asserts that the video is misleading as a result of the the question and the whole answer being cut out it is misleading. I reject that assertion.

The Question asked by the Member for Scenic Rim was:<sup>6</sup>

*Mr KRAUSE: My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister confirm that Beaudesert Hospital's maternity unit was bypassed almost every week across December, January and February, with patients being referred to Logan Hospital? **Why didn't the Minister tell the mums of Beaudesert about the bypass happening on her watch?***

Nowhere in that Question was I asked about my advice, or solutions that I am offering to women, or anything that would give rise to what the Member for Mudgeeraba asserts is the context of the interjection

In my respectful submission, including the question I was asked would not, and does not, provide any additional context and its exclusion does not amount to a misleading account of parliamentary proceedings.

Finally, the Member for Mudgeeraba asserts that the rules of rebroadcasting of proceedings are offended by the failure not to include the whole answer in the post.

For the reasons set out above, the inclusion of the whole answer would not have provided any greater context to the proceedings and to the Member for Mudgeeraba's interjection.

### **Steps taken prior to publication**

Prior to posting the recording of parliament onto my social media, and at every necessary stage of this matter, I sought advice from the Clerk of Parliament.

The initial advice from the Clerk of the Parliament was that the video should include the Member for Mudgeeraba's withdrawal. I followed that advice.

When Hansard identified that the Member for Mudgeeraba had said "Cross your legs" instead of "Close your legs", I took the advice of the Clerk and updated relevant captions to reflect this.

On posts in which the caption could not be amended, I deleted the video and reposted it with the correct caption.

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<sup>6</sup> Hansard 22 May 2024 1705

## **Conclusion**

While I was standing in parliament providing a responsive and detailed answer to a question on maternity services, the Member for Mudgeeraba yelled out 'Cross your legs'.

Following that interjection, two things happened;

1. I was immediately shocked and taken aback, as evidenced in the video recording,
2. The Speaker immediately asked the Member for Mudgeeraba to withdraw her comment, which she did.

The Member for Mudgeeraba claims that I implied that her interjection was an attack on women. There is nothing in my caption or in the video to suggest such an implication. Rather I have captured an interjection that happened in parliament. In my submission, it was not an appropriate interjection, and it was an interjection that I found offensive and abhorrent.

As stated in *McGee on Parliamentary Procedure*:<sup>8</sup>

*Merely stating one's opinion of the effect of a committee's decision cannot amount to a contempt. A statement must purport to be a factual description of parliamentary proceedings to constitute a false or misleading account. An opinion piece will not usually trigger this contempt, although it may be considered a contempt if it amounts to a serious reflection on the character of the members of the committee.*

The video I posted was a recording from parliament that had not been altered or edited. My opinion, that the interjection from the Member for Mudgeeraba was abhorrent, is my judgment or view on what she said in Parliament. In my submission it would not give rise to contempt.

In my submission, the video is not a false or misleading account of proceedings before the House. It cannot be properly characterised as a contempt of parliament.

## **Implied Freedom of Political Communication**

The High Court has long held that the Australia Constitution recognises an implied freedom of political communication.

The Parliament is able to secure accountability, and in turn fulfil its constitutional function through:<sup>10</sup>

*the freedom of speech in debate which, in England, historically was a potent instrument by which the House of Commons defended its right to consider and express opinions on the conduct of affairs of State by the Sovereign and the Ministers, advisers and servants of the Crown.*

Knowledge of what is occurring in parliament and what elected representatives are saying in the House is fundamental to the parliament's capacity to achieving accountability.

This opinion was also expressed by Mason CJ in *Australian Capital Television Pty Ltd v Commonwealth*, where his Honour referred to elected representatives as having:<sup>12</sup>

*a responsibility not only to ascertain the views of the electorate but also to explain and account for their decisions and actions in government and to inform the people so that they may make informed judgments on relevant matters.*

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<sup>8</sup> David McGee, *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, 3rd edition, 2005, p770

<sup>10</sup> *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997) 189 CLR 520, 558.

<sup>12</sup> *Australian Capital Television Pty Ltd v Commonwealth* (1992) 177 CLR 106, 139.

The ability of the Queensland public to know what a politician has said in parliament directly bears upon their capacity to, or opportunity for, them to “*exercise a free and informed choice as electors.*”<sup>14</sup> Politicians and the media regularly show snippets of Parliament on the news or on various social media platforms, without providing the whole question and answer or a speech in its entirety. It is not always necessarily or practical to provide the whole interaction and often it would add no more context to the portion of the recording that they are using.

In my respectful submission, the recording of the proceedings I published is “*relevant information about the functioning of government in Australia and about the policies of political parties and candidates for election.*”<sup>15</sup>

Curtailing the ability to publicise this information could significantly impact on the ability of an individual to exercise their electoral choice and on the media to report on the events of parliament.

I would be pleased to provide any further information on this matter or to assist in any other manner if it would be useful to do so. If that is the case, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Your sincerely,



**Shannon Fentiman MP**  
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services  
Minister for Women  
Member for Waterford

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<sup>14</sup> *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997) 189 CLR 520, 561.

<sup>15</sup> *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997) 189 CLR 520, 560



# Ethics Committee

## Ethics Committee

Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000

Ph: 61 7 355 36610

email: [ethics@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:ethics@parliament.qld.gov.au)  
[www.parliament.qld.gov.au/ethics](http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/ethics)

Ref: A1295152

14 June 2024

Ms Ros Bates MP  
Member for Mudgeeraba

By email: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Bates

### **Matter of privilege referred by the Speaker on 7 June 2024 relating to an allegation of publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings of the House**

On 11 June 2024, the Ethics Committee (the committee) received a referral from Mr Speaker relating to an allegation that the Hon Shannon Fentiman MP published a false or misleading account of proceedings of the House. The Speaker made a ruling with respect to this allegation on 7 June 2024. The referral letter and Speaker's Ruling are **attached** for your reference.

The material before the committee states that the Minister published a shortened excerpt of the broadcast of proceedings on her social media. It is alleged that the shortened nature of the excerpt meant it was potentially misleading in that it did not provide context to your interjection.

For your information, the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* (POQA) and the *Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly* (the Standing Orders) set out the relevant rules relating to contempt.

Section 37 of the POQA defines the meaning of "contempt" of the Assembly as follows—

- (1) *"Contempt" of the Assembly means a breach or disobedience of the powers, rights or immunities, or a contempt, of the Assembly or its members or committees.*
- (2) *Conduct, including words, is not contempt of the Assembly unless it amounts, or is intended or likely to amount, to an improper interference with—*
  - (a) *the free exercise by the Assembly or a committee of its authority or functions; or*
  - (b) *the free performance by a member of the member's duties as a member.*

Standing Order 266(13) provides that an example of a contempt is:

*Publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings before the House or a committee.*

The Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions<sup>1</sup> state:

*The Legislative Assembly authorises the further publication of this broadcast of the proceedings of the Queensland Parliament, subject to the following conditions:*

...

3. *Excerpts of proceedings are to be placed in context so as to avoid any misrepresentation.*

Section 58 of the POQA states:

- (1) *The Assembly may at any time impose conditions on the publication of a parliamentary record.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-the-Assembly/Live-and-Archived-Broadcasts/Terms-and-Conditions>.



*(2) It does not matter whether the parliamentary record has been previously published or whether the Assembly authorises or has authorised the publication.*

*Example— Assume an audio or visual record of proceedings in the Assembly is published on the internet by an authorised publisher under section 51. The Assembly may impose conditions on the publication by the authorised publisher. The Assembly may also impose conditions on the publication by a person who has accessed the internet publication of a parliamentary record derived from that access.*

*(3) Publication of a parliamentary record in contravention of a condition imposed by the Assembly is a contempt of the Assembly.*

The committee has determined that the publication of the excerpt of the broadcast of proceedings could constitute two different contempts of Parliament. First, under s 37 of the POQA and Standing Order 266(13) and second, under section 58(3) of the POQA.

In determining whether the social media post amounts to a contempt in accordance with s 37 of the POQA and Standing Order 266(13), the committee will be considering the following elements:

**Element 1:** Has the Minister published an account of proceedings of the House?

**Element 2:** Was that account of proceedings false or misleading?

**Element 3:** Did the publishing of the false and misleading proceedings amount, or was intended or likely to amount, to an improper interference with the free exercise by the Assembly or a committee of its authority or functions; or the free performance by a member of the member's duties as a member?

In determining whether the social media post amounts to a contempt in accordance with section 58(3) of the POQA, the committee will be considering the following elements:

**Element 1:** Was there a publication of a parliamentary record by the Minister?

**Element 2:** Was that publication in contravention of a condition imposed by the Assembly?

At this stage, the committee has not made any determinations in relation to the matter. The committee has a copy of your correspondence to Mr Speaker of 22 May 2024. The committee invites you to provide any further information which specifically addresses the elements of the alleged contempts above, or any other information you deem relevant to the committee's deliberations.

The committee has established procedures for dealing with privileges references, which ensure procedural fairness and natural justice is afforded to all parties. These procedures are set out in Chapters 44 and 45 of the Standing Orders. The committee also observes the instructions to committees regarding witnesses contained in Schedule 3 to the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders can be read [here](#).

Please note that Standing Order 211B(1) prohibits disclosure of the committee's proceedings, which includes this correspondence:

*The proceedings of the Ethics Committee or a subcommittee of that committee on a matter before the Committee that is not open to the public or authorised to be published remains strictly confidential to the committee until the committee has reported to the House or otherwise published the proceedings.*

Standing Order 211B does not prevent you from seeking legal advice in relation to the matter. However, your legal representative will also be bound by the same confidentiality requirement.

For your information, Standing Order 211B(3)(b) provides that when the Ethics Committee makes its final report to the House on a matter the committee shall at the same time table any submissions received or evidence taken in respect of the matter, unless the committee resolves that some or all of its proceedings remain confidential.

The committee would appreciate if any additional information could be provided by **COB Friday 28 June 2024**.

Should you have any queries regarding these matters or require further information, please contact our Committee Secretary, Ms Erin Hastie (email: [ethics@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:ethics@parliament.qld.gov.au); telephone: 3553 6610).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stirling', with a long, sweeping underline.

**Hon Stirling Hinchliffe MP**

**Chair**

Enc.



# Ethics Committee

## Ethics Committee

Parliament House  
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Ref: A1295154

14 June 2024

Hon Shannon Fentiman MP  
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women  
By email: [REDACTED]

Dear Hon Fentiman

### **Matter of privilege referred by the Speaker on 7 June 2024 relating to an allegation of publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings of the House**

On 11 June 2024, the Ethics Committee (the committee) received a referral from Mr Speaker relating to an allegation that you published a false or misleading account of proceedings of the House. The Speaker made a ruling with respect to this allegation on 7 June 2024. The referral letter and Speaker's Ruling are **attached** for your reference.

The material before the committee states that you published a shortened excerpt of the broadcast of proceedings on your social media. It is alleged that the shortened nature of the excerpt meant it was potentially misleading in that it did not provide context to the member for Mudgeeraba's interjection.

For your information, the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* (POQA) and the *Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly* (the Standing Orders) set out the relevant rules relating to contempt.

Section 37 of the POQA defines the meaning of "contempt" of the Assembly as follows—

- (1) *"Contempt" of the Assembly means a breach or disobedience of the powers, rights or immunities, or a contempt, of the Assembly or its members or committees.*
- (2) *Conduct, including words, is not contempt of the Assembly unless it amounts, or is intended or likely to amount, to an improper interference with—*
  - (a) *the free exercise by the Assembly or a committee of its authority or functions; or*
  - (b) *the free performance by a member of the member's duties as a member.*

Standing Order 266(13) provides that an example of a contempt is:

*Publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings before the House or a committee.*

The Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions<sup>1</sup> state:

*The Legislative Assembly authorises the further publication of this broadcast of the proceedings of the Queensland Parliament, subject to the following conditions:*

...

3. *Excerpts of proceedings are to be placed in context so as to avoid any misrepresentation.*

Section 58 of the POQA states:

- (1) *The Assembly may at any time impose conditions on the publication of a parliamentary record.*

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-the-Assembly/Live-and-Archived-Broadcasts/Terms-and-Conditions>.

*(2) It does not matter whether the parliamentary record has been previously published or whether the Assembly authorises or has authorised the publication.*

*Example— Assume an audio or visual record of proceedings in the Assembly is published on the internet by an authorised publisher under section 51. The Assembly may impose conditions on the publication by the authorised publisher. The Assembly may also impose conditions on the publication by a person who has accessed the internet publication of a parliamentary record derived from that access.*

*(3) Publication of a parliamentary record in contravention of a condition imposed by the Assembly is a contempt of the Assembly.*

The committee has determined that the publication of the excerpt of the broadcast of proceedings could constitute two different contempts of Parliament. First, under s 37 of the POQA and Standing Order 266(13) and second, under section 58(3) of the POQA.

In determining whether your social media posts amounts to a contempt in accordance with s 37 of the POQA and Standing Order 266(13), the committee will be considering the following elements:

**Element 1:** Has the Minister published an account of proceedings of the House?

**Element 2:** Was that account of proceedings false or misleading?

**Element 3:** Did the publishing of the false and misleading proceedings amount, or was intended or likely to amount, to an improper interference with the free exercise by the Assembly or a committee of its authority or functions; or the free performance by a member of the member's duties as a member?

In determining whether your social media post amounts to a contempt in accordance with section 58(3) of the POQA, the committee will be considering the following elements:

**Element 1:** Was there a publication of a parliamentary record by **the Minister**?

**Element 2:** Was that publication in contravention of a condition imposed by the Assembly?

At this stage, the committee has not made any determinations in relation to the matter. The committee has a copy of your correspondence to Mr Speaker of 30 May 2024. The committee invites you to provide any further information which specifically addresses the elements of the alleged contempts above, or any other information you deem relevant to the committee's deliberations.

The committee has established procedures for dealing with privileges references, which ensure procedural fairness and natural justice is afforded to all parties. These procedures are set out in Chapters 44 and 45 of the Standing Orders. The committee also observes the instructions to committees regarding witnesses contained in Schedule 3 to the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders can be read [here](#).

Please note that Standing Order 211B(1) prohibits disclosure of the committee's proceedings, which includes this correspondence:

*The proceedings of the Ethics Committee or a subcommittee of that committee on a matter before the Committee that is not open to the public or authorised to be published remains strictly confidential to the committee until the committee has reported to the House or otherwise published the proceedings.*

Standing Order 211B does not prevent you from seeking legal advice in relation to the matter. However, your legal representative will also be bound by the same confidentiality requirement. Please do not include your electorate office or ministerial staff in correspondence with the committee about this matter.

For your information, Standing Order 211B(3)(b) provides that when the Ethics Committee makes its final report to the House on a matter the committee shall at the same time table any submissions received or evidence taken in respect of the matter, unless the committee resolves that some or all of its proceedings remain confidential.

The committee would appreciate if any additional information could be provided by **COB Friday 28 June 2024**.

Should you have any queries regarding these matters or require further information, please contact our Committee Secretary, Ms Erin Hastie (email: [ethics@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:ethics@parliament.qld.gov.au); telephone: 3553 6610).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stirling', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Hon Stirling Hinchliffe MP**

Chair

Enc.



# Ethics Committee

**Ethics Committee**  
Parliament House  
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Ref: A1295153

14 June 2024

Mr Neil Laurie  
Clerk of the Parliament

By email: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Laurie

## **Matter of privilege referred by the Speaker on 7 June 2024 relating to an allegation of publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings of the House**

On 11 June 2024, the Ethics Committee (the committee) received a referral from Mr Speaker relating to an allegation that Hon Shannon Fentiman MP published a false or misleading account of proceedings of the House. Mr Speaker made a ruling with respect to this allegation on 7 June 2024. The referral letter and Speaker's Ruling are **attached** for your reference.

The committee notes Minister Fentiman's submission dated 30 May 2024 that was included in the referral. In that submission, she stated:

*Prior to posting the recording of parliament onto my social media, and at every necessary stage of this matter, I sought advice from the Clerk of Parliament.*

*The initial advice from the Clerk of the Parliament was that the video should include the Member for Mudgeeraba's withdrawal. I followed that advice.*

*When Hansard identified that the Member for Mudgeeraba had said "Cross your legs" instead of "Close your legs", I took the advice of the Clerk and updated relevant captions to reflect this.*

*On posts in which the caption could not be amended, I deleted the video and reposted it with the correct caption.*

The committee would appreciate if you could provide the committee with the procedural advice you provided to Minister Fentiman referred to in her submission.

The committee would your response by **COB Friday 28 June 2024**.

Should you have any queries regarding these matters or require further information, please contact our Committee Secretary, Ms Erin Hastie (email: [ethics@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:ethics@parliament.qld.gov.au); telephone: 3553 6610).

Yours sincerely

**Hon Stirling Hinchliffe MP**  
Chair

Enc.



Our Ref: A1302001

26 June 2024

Hon Stirling Hinchliffe  
Chair  
Ethics Committee  
Parliament House  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

[ethics@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:ethics@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Hon Hinchliffe

I refer to the committee's letter dated 14 June 2024 regarding the matter of privilege referred by the Speaker on 7 June 2024 relating to an allegation of publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings of the House.

***Recusal***

I wish to note that I saw the Minister's submission to Mr Speaker dated 30 May 2024 on its receipt and immediately recused myself further from the matter.

***Events of 22 May 2024 leading up to post***

The Minister's recollection of events and my recollection of events are at variance. I stress that I am not alleging that the Minister is seeking to mislead, simply that our recollections are different.

It is not disputed that, prior to posting the recording of parliament onto social media, the Minister sought advice from me.

It is my recollection that this occurred either late in the morning or early afternoon of 22 May 2024.

It is my recollection that the Minister showed me a video clip on her phone of the exchange that had occurred in question time that morning and that the clip already included captions and the Member for Mudgeeraba's withdrawal. The Minister pointed out to me that the Member's withdrawal had been included in the video clip to ensure compliance with the conditions of access (Condition 4 - excerpts of proceedings which are subsequently withdrawn may be rebroadcast only if the withdrawal is also rebroadcast).

I note at this time I was acting on my recollection of what had happened in the morning session, as I had not seen the *Record of Proceedings*, nor the full broadcast.

I expressed my concern to the Minister that the clip may still not comply with Condition 3 (excerpts of proceedings are to be placed in context so as to avoid any misrepresentation), because it did not include the question and exchanges before the clip. The difficulties of video clips being taken from the broadcast where there was considerable time elapsing between potentially relevant parts of the broadcast was discussed. The Minister indicated that she would ensure context to the clip in the main message of the post. The Minister expressed her belief that the main message and the video clip with the withdrawal included placed it in context. I expressed my doubts as to whether this would be sufficient and indicated that the Minister may have to withdraw the clip if there was a complaint about context.

The discussion ended with the less than correct prophetic statement by me: "I suppose the worst thing that can happen is that you will need to withdraw the post".

### ***Events of 22 May 2024 after the post***

At about 1.55pm that day I returned a telephone call from the Member for Mudgeeraba, who was complaining about the Minister's post. This was the first of a number of complaints made this day about the Minister's post to me by telephone or deputation. I requested that the complaints be put in writing to the Speaker.

At 3.14pm that day I received advice from the Acting Chief Hansard Reporter that there was some dispute about whether the phrase the Member for Mudgeeraba had been ordered to withdraw during question time that morning was "Cross your legs" or "Close your legs". (By this time the proof *Record of Proceedings* had been published.) I was assured by the Acting Chief Hansard Reporter that both her and the reporter on duty had checked the audio and the phrase was "Cross your Legs", not "Close your legs".

At some stage in the afternoon I listened to the full audio exchange myself.

At some stage in the afternoon I also viewed the Minister's post and the comments. It was clear from the comments that many of those commenting thought the phrase used by the Member for Mudgeeraba was being directed to the Minister.

At 3.28pm a written complaint was made by the Manager of Opposition Business to the Speaker (cc'ing myself) about the post. Another was received from the Member for Mudgeeraba at 4.39pm.

The following text exchange then took place between the Minister and myself:

Clerk: Minister can you please take down your posts with video from today. It currently says in captions "close" rather than "cross" legs. Hansard has confirmed "cross" words used. (4:46pm)

Clerk: As stands misrepresentation of record. (4:46pm)

Minister: Yes will change it (5:02pm)

Clerk: If replacing it need to look at length and context. It is difficult given all the interjections but as cut does not put within context of maternity (5:04pm)

Minister: I'm happy to make the clip longer but before that part of the video it's me saying I can't get a word in and her interjection stands alone. (5:08pm)



Clerk: I know it is a very difficult one to clip because of the interjections but the argument is that without the question there is no context to the issue re maternity (5:33pm)

Clerk: I hate being the thought police (5:33pm)

Minister: The question has nothing to do with advice for mums so there is no context to be found- I'm reposting with correct captions - so as not to offend the standing orders - not misleading or ridicule (5:37pm)

Clerk: Ok - I have done my job - be over to Speaker (5:42pm)

There were further conversations between other members and myself and the Minister and myself on 23 and 24 May 2024 regarding the post and its impacts, but I would prefer not to traverse those issues.

### **Analysis of interchange during question time**

It is important to note that the *Record of Proceedings* does not include every interjection made, simply those that are responded to or those the subject of warning and/or withdrawal.

The Acting Chief Hansard Reporter and Senior Reporter subsequently reviewed the incident in Question Time on Wednesday, 22 May 2024 that led to the interjection and its withdrawal, the subject of the Minister's post. Included within this review were interjections (in red below), that were not included in the *Record of Proceedings*:

#### **Maternity Services**

Mr KRAUSE: My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister confirm that Beaudesert Hospital's maternity unit was bypassed almost every week across December, January and February, with patients being referred to Logan Hospital? Why didn't the Minister tell the mums of Beaudesert about the bypass happening on her watch?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. It is very pleasing that we do have birthing services back at Beaudesert, as I said. Particularly over the Christmas period, there are very small amounts of time where sometimes staff absences mean—

Powell: Months

Opposition members: Every week.

Simpson: Every week for months.

Gerber: Three months.

Powell: For three months.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Ms FENTIMAN: Over the Christmas period there are times when staff take leave, but we work with the patients. The hardworking staff do deserve a break at Christmas time and we work with local mothers to make sure they are supported.

Powell: Long Christmas.

Bates: That counts January-February.

Crisafulli: And the community weren't told.

Minnikin: Oh, what in January and February.

Crisafulli: Resource the systems.

Bates: Bypass. Bypass the \*\*\*

Crisafulli: And trying to cover it up.

Bleijie: Hold the birth for a couple of months until they come back from leave.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms FENTIMAN: If I can get a word in, Mr Speaker, can I say that all of those mums—

Ms Bates: Cross your legs!

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Mudgeeraba, you are warned under the standing orders. I ask you to withdraw that comment.

Ms BATES: I withdraw.

Government members interjected.

Grace interjecting,

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for McConnel. We do not need any assistance.

Ms FENTIMAN: Rather than creating unnecessary fear in the community, what happens is that we work with any expectant mums—

Bleijie: Cover up.

Mrs Gerber: Cover it up.

Bleijie: Tried to cover it up.

Ms FENTIMAN: I absolutely reject that assertion from the member for Currumbin that we are covering anything up. This is made public. The HHS works with local families—

Mr Bleijie interjected. Bleijie: It has gone from days now to months.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, member for Kawana! Pause the clock. Minister, you have one minute and 23 seconds remaining; do you have anything further to add?

Ms FENTIMAN: I do, Mr Speaker. It is absolutely outrageous for those opposite to come in here and create fear for expectant mums in the community. I want to be very clear that hospital and health services work with expectant mums and the community.

Crisafulli: Every week for three months. Sometimes they may be on bypass for 24 hours and no patients are impacted. Powell: Every week for three months. Sometimes, if birthing services are required from Beaudesert, we will work with a small number of women who, with their midwives, go to Logan Hospital. We work with the Rural Doctors Association, the AMA and our nurses and midwives to make sure those women are supported. As members opposite well know—because when in government they did a lot of work with the Rural Doctors Association to bring birthing back to Beaudesert—it has to be safe. Bates: Beaudesert, Cooktown and Ingham. We work very hard with the obstetricians and midwives to ensure birthing services remain at Beaudesert. Crisafulli:

And tried to cover it up. Information around what happens from time to time Crisafulli: Didn't tell the community, for short periods, is always publicly available and it is well communicated to the community and to families. Powell: Oh, so the mothers are going to go on a website, do they. They have to go on a website and check it out. I reject that wholeheartedly and ask those opposite to stop causing fear in the community. Opposition member: They go on the worldwide web. Bleijie: They go on the worldwide web. Stop covering up.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Premier will please stop interjecting at one another across the chamber

## Observations

I make the following observations to the committee:

- The Legislative Assembly authorises the further publication of its broadcast of proceedings, subject to the various conditions, including:
  - The material must only be used for the purposes of fair and accurate reports of proceedings and must not in any circumstances be used for:
    - political advertising, election campaigning or any advertising campaign that would normally require at law a broadcaster to announce who has authorised the material;
    - satire or ridicule; and
    - commercial sponsorship or commercial advertising.
  - excerpts of proceedings are to be placed in context so as to avoid any misrepresentation of the proceedings.
- There has been increasing republication of excerpts of the broadcast on social media, and complaints about those excerpts not complying with the broadcast rules is becoming a more frequent occurrence.
- My delegates or I try to resolve any complaints about the broadcast conditions informally. Usually we will approach the member in whose name the posts are made and ask them to be taken down.
- This system has been reasonably successful in the past, but in more recent times members have been resistant to removing posts, or sometimes remove the post only to replace it with another similar offending post at a later time.
- Issues such as the use of material in political advertising and campaigning (usually photos taken from the broadcast and repurposed for flyers/posts etc.) or the use of material for satire or ridicule are easy to determine and are largely “black and white” issues. These cause little issues in terms of the informal process as the material can be easily determined to be offending or not offending the rules.
- Issues like context and misrepresentation are much more likely to fall into the “grey” and necessarily require a subjective view of the material. Obviously, my delegates or I can have a different view from the member about context or misrepresentation. I am increasingly uncomfortable with my delegates or I having to argue with members about issues of context or misrepresentation, which are usually political.
- The Speaker in a statement on 24 May 2024, made the following comment which I endorse:

*It is clear that there are a number of issues driving the increasing complaints and the reluctance to withdraw offending posts:*

*Firstly, the creators of posts made on the social media sites of members are often not the member themselves. The creators are usually skilled in the art of social media and are focused on what sort of posts attract views. Shorter clips are the preferred fodder for social media, but shorter clips often do not show full context.*

*Secondly, the third party creators are not focused on the rules of this House, but rather are focused on good copy.*

*Thirdly, if a post is achieving a great number of views, there is a reticence to remove the post, despite the informal guidance provided by the Clerk.*

- This incident also highlights a number of other issues:
  - Any transcript (including the *Record of Proceedings*) tends to be lineal, whereas statements made by different members may be contemporaneous and not directed to the same conversation.
  - Social media posts are often posted before the proof *Record of Proceedings* is published.
  - Context can include matters that are not in the *Record of Proceedings*. In this instance, the Member for Kawana's interjection, immediately before the Member for Mudgeeraba's interjection, was not included in the *Record of Proceedings* under the rules for Hansard.
  - Some interjections can be heard in full or in part in the normal broadcast and others are unintelligible or masked by noise.
  - Some interjections unintelligible in the normal broadcast can be heard on Hansard's internal systems or isolated and identified.
  - On reflection, I am of the belief that the correct context for the interjection in this instance was:

*Bleijie: Hold the birth for a couple of months until they come back from leave.*

*Opposition members interjected.*

*Ms FENTIMAN: If I can get a word in, Mr Speaker, can I say that all of those mums—*

*Ms Bates: Cross your legs!*

That is, the Member for Mudgeeraba was responding to, or adding to, the Member for Kawana's interjection (that did not appear in the *Record of Proceedings*).

Put more bluntly, the Member for Mudgeeraba was essentially implying that pregnant mothers would have to cross their legs and await maternity services.

- It appears that, in the Minister's opinion, the Member's interjection was directed at the Minister and stood alone. No doubt the absence of the detail of the Member for Kawana's interjection in the *Record of Proceedings* and the difficulty hearing it in the broadcast (due to noise) led to this view.
- Whichever view is taken, the reality is that once something is published on social media the readers and contributors will make of it what they wish. Not even the person who makes the post can control what will happen on those platforms. Arguably, this places

a higher duty of care for original posts and a continuing duty of care to alter, remove or clarify posts should readers and contributors act under a misapprehension.

I agree that members of parliament have a responsibility not only to ascertain the views of the electorate but also to explain and account for their decisions and actions and to inform the people so that they may make informed judgments on relevant matters. Members should be held to account for what they say and do in parliament. However, it is also critically important that their statements, subject to critical examination, be in the correct context. The problem with social media is that it is a forum usually devoid of proper context.

Yours sincerely



Neil Laurie

The Clerk of the Parliament

# Ruth O’Gorman KC

Barrister-at-Law

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12 July 2024

Hon Stirling Hinchcliffe MP  
Chair  
Ethics Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Mr Hinchcliffe,

**Re: Matter of privilege referred by the Speaker on 7 June 2024 relating to an allegation of publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings of the House**

## INTRODUCTION

1. On 14 June 2024, you wrote to the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women, the Honourable Shannon Fentiman MP (**the Minister**) in respect of the above matter.
2. I have been engaged by the Minister to respond to that letter.
3. This correspondence should be read in conjunction with the Minister’s letter to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (**the Speaker**) dated 30 May 2024 which contains a written explanation of the allegations raised in this matter.

## BACKGROUND

4. On 22 May 2024, the Minister was asked a question about maternity services during Question Time in Parliament. As the Minister attempted to answer the question, she was continually interrupted by interjections from members of the Opposition.
5. A copy of pages 1711 to 1712 of Hansard, which shows the full exchange, is attached.
6. At one point, the following exchange occurred:

Ms FENTIMAN: Mr Speaker, can I say all of those mums –

Ms BATES: Cross your legs!

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Mudgeeraba, you are warned under the standing orders. I ask you to withdraw that comment.

Ms BATES: I withdraw.

7. Later that day, the Minister posted the video which depicts the above exchange on her social media pages. The video was accompanied by a caption which read:

This is what the LNP Shadow Minister for Health and Women Ros Bates yelled while I was on my feet talking about women’s health and maternity services in Parliament today.

8. Together, the video and caption comprise the post which is the subject of this matter (**the post**). The post was later amended to reflect the fact that the Minister initially thought the Member had said “close your legs”, not “cross your legs”. Nothing turns on the fact the post was amended.
9. On the same day, the Member for Mudgeeraba Ros Bates (**the Member**) wrote to the Speaker alleging that the Minister’s post amounted to the “publishing of a false and misleading account of a parliamentary proceeding on Facebook and a breach of the rebroadcasting rules”. She alleged that the post involved a selective editing of the record of proceedings which implied that her interjection was an attack on women.
10. On 11 June 2024, the Speaker referred this matter to the Ethics Committee (**the Committee**) for consideration and report in accordance with Standing Order 269.
11. On 14 June 2024, the Committee wrote to the Minister. The allegation that had been referred to the Committee was described in these terms:

The material before the committee states that you published a shortened excerpt of the broadcast of proceedings on your social media. It is alleged that the shortened nature of the excerpt meant it was potentially misleading in that it did not provide context to the member for Mudgeeraba’s interjection.

12. In that letter, the Committee indicated that it will be considering whether the Minister's post amounts to a contempt by reason of the operation of:
- a. Section 37 of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 (**POQ Act**) (and Standing Order 266(13)); or
  - b. Section 58(3) of the POQ Act.
13. This submission seeks to explain why the Minister's post does not amount to a contempt pursuant to either section of the POQ Act.

### **THE RELEVANT SECTIONS**

14. It is useful to set out both of the relevant sections of the POQ Act for ease of reference, as well as Standing Order 266(13) and the relevant condition in the Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions.
15. Section 37 of the POQ Act provides:
- (1) Contempt of the Assembly means a breach or disobedience of the powers, rights or immunities, or a contempt, of the Assembly or its members or committees.
  - (2) Conduct, including words, is not contempt of the Assembly unless it amounts, or is intended or likely to amount, to an improper interference with
    - (a) the free exercise by the Assembly or a committee of its authority or functions; or
    - (b) the free performance by a member of the member's duties as a member.

#### *Examples of contempt—*

- 1. assaulting, obstructing or insulting a member—
  - (a) in the member's coming to or going from the Assembly or a meeting of a committee; or
  - (b) anywhere else because of the member's performance of his or her parliamentary duties
- 2. attempting to compel a member by force, insult or menace to take a particular position in relation to a proposition or matter pending, or expected to be brought, before the Assembly or a committee



3. sending a threat to a member because of the member's performance of his or her parliamentary duties
4. sending a challenge to fight a member
5. the offering of a bribe to or attempting to bribe a member
6. creating or joining in any disturbance in the Assembly or before a committee or in the Assembly's or a committee's vicinity while it is sitting that may interrupt its proceedings
7. contravention of section 29(1), 30(1) or (4), 31(3), 32(2) or (6), 33(2) or (8) or 69B(1), (2) or (4)
8. preventing or attempting to prevent a person from complying with section 29(1), 30(1) or (4), 31(3), 32(2) or (6), 33(2) or (8) or 69B(1), (2) or (4)
9. improperly influencing, or attempting to improperly influence, a person, in relation to any evidence to be given by the person to the Assembly or a committee
10. treating a person adversely and without lawful authority, or attempting to do so, because of evidence given by the person to the Assembly or a committee or because of a belief or suspicion about that evidence

16. Standing Order 266(13) provides that the following conduct may be treated as a contempt:

Publishing a false or misleading account of proceedings before the House or a committee.

17. Section 58 of the POQ Act provides:

- (1) The Assembly may at any time impose conditions on the publication of a parliamentary record.
- (2) It does not matter whether the parliamentary record has been previously published or whether the Assembly authorises or has authorised the publication.
- ...
- (3) Publication of a parliamentary record in contravention of a condition imposed by the Assembly is a contempt of the Assembly.

18. The Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions (Conditions of Access) relevantly provides:

The Legislative Assembly authorises the further publication of this broadcast of the proceedings of the Queensland Parliament, subject to the following conditions:

...

3. Excerpts of proceedings are to be placed in context so as to avoid any misrepresentation.

#### **A CONTEMPT PURSUANT TO SECTION 37 OF THE POQ ACT?**

19. The Committee has indicated it will be considering whether the post amounts to a contempt pursuant to section 37 of the POQ Act by reference to whether the publishing of the post amounts to the conduct described in Standing Order 266(13).

20. Specifically, the Committee will be considering the following three elements:

**Element 1:** Has the Minister published an account of proceedings of the House?

**Element 2:** Was that account of proceedings false or misleading?

**Element 3:** Did the publishing of the false and misleading proceedings amount, or was intended or likely to amount, to an improper interference with the free exercise by the Assembly or a committee of its authority or functions; or the free performance by a member of the member's duties as a member?

21. The publishing of the post does not constitute a contempt pursuant to section 37 of the POQ Act because, as is demonstrated below, neither the second nor the third element is made out.

#### **Element one**

22. This element is satisfied. The Minister published an account of proceedings before the House.

#### **Element two**

23. This element is not satisfied. The published account of proceedings is neither false nor misleading.

24. The published account is an actual excerpt of the footage of proceedings before the House. There can be no question of it being false.

25. The real question is whether the short nature of the published account of proceedings renders it misleading. In her 22 May 2024 letter to the Speaker, the Member complained that the post was misleading because it implied that her interjection was an attack on women.
26. There is no basis for this complaint. There is nothing about the Minister's post which implies that the Member's interjection was an attack on women. Rather, what the post shows is exactly what the Minister's caption says: that while the Minister was on her feet, answering a question in Question Time, she was interrupted by the interjection shown in the video.
27. The Member's interjection was improper and detracted from the dignified conduct of the business of the Assembly. The interruption was not one which was permitted by the Standing Orders.<sup>1</sup> The language used was crass and unbecoming, even for the Member's stated purpose of suggesting that "it appeared the only solution the government offered to declining services was that expectant mothers cross their legs as a means of preventing births occurring".<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the interjection was quarrelsome.<sup>3</sup>
28. For these reasons, the interjection was disrespectful both of the Minister as the person speaking at that time, and the Assembly generally. The expression on the Minister's face, and that of her colleagues, upon hearing the interjection shows the interjection was immediately, and genuinely, regarded as disrespectful by those who heard it.
29. The interjection was also disorderly. The Speaker's immediate intervention to warn the Member under the Standing Orders demonstrates that her conduct was immediately recognised by the Speaker as being so. In warning the Member, the Speaker's reference to the Standing Orders must have been a reference to Standing Orders 252 to 254, which authorise the Speaker to order a member who is "grossly disorderly" to withdraw from the Chamber for a specified period, and to name a member who continues to persistently and wilfully obstruct the business of the House.
30. On its face, the publication of the post amounts to a public criticism by the Minister of the Member's disrespectful and disorderly conduct towards her in Parliament. The post accurately demonstrates that the Member's conduct was disrespectful and disorderly and that, therefore, the criticism was warranted. The post was not misleading.

### **Element three**

31. Even if element two were made out, the post would not constitute a contempt unless it also satisfied element three. It does not, because the publishing of the post cannot be said to amount, or have been intended or be likely to amount, to an improper interference with the free exercise by the Assembly of its authority or functions, or the free performance of the Member's duties.

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<sup>1</sup> See Standing Order 251.

<sup>2</sup> See the Minister's letter to the Speaker dated 22 May 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Contrary to Standing Order 246.

32. The publishing of the post:

- a. Did not interfere with the free exercise by the Assembly of its authority or functions. It had no impact at all on the Assembly's continued business. Similarly, it was plainly not intended or likely to have this effect.
- b. Did not interfere with the free performance of the Member's duties. The post amounted to a criticism of the Member's conduct on 22 May 2024, but such criticism was justified for the reasons identified at paragraphs [26] to [29] above. However, the criticism did not interfere with the continued free performance of the Member's duties. Similarly, it was plainly not intended or likely to have this effect.

33. The examples of contempt set out in section 37 assist in identifying the kind of conduct which will amount to a contempt. In relation to conduct directed at members, the examples include assaulting, obstructing or insulting, or threatening or bribing a member. Clearly, such conduct would amount, or be intended or likely to amount, to an improper interference with the free performance of a member's duties. By contrast, mere criticism (even public criticism, as here) of a member's conduct during Parliamentary sittings by another member (particularly in circumstances where, as here, that criticism is plainly justified) would not.

**Conclusion as to whether there has been a contempt pursuant to section 37 of the POQ Act**

34. There has been no contempt pursuant to section 37 of the POQ Act. The first element of this potential contempt is made out. However, neither the second nor the third element is made out.

**A CONTEMPT PURSUANT TO SECTION 58(3) OF THE POQ ACT?**

35. The Committee has indicated it will be considering whether the post amounts to a contempt pursuant to section 58(3) of the POQ Act by reference to whether the post contravened a condition of publication imposed by the Assembly. Specifically, the Committee will be considering the following two elements:

**Element 1:** Was there a publication of a parliamentary record by the Minister?

**Element 2:** Was that publication in contravention of a condition imposed by the Assembly?

36. The publishing of the post does not constitute a contempt pursuant to section 58(3) of the POQ Act because the second element is not made out.

## Element one

37. This element is satisfied. The Minister published a parliamentary record.

## Element two

38. This element is not satisfied. The publication did not contravene a condition imposed by the Assembly.

39. The Assembly has authorised the “further publication” of the broadcast of the proceedings of the Queensland Parliament, subject to a number of conditions imposed on such publication by the Assembly. The authorisation, and the conditions, are contained in the Broadcast Footage Terms and Conditions.<sup>4</sup> Condition 3 requires that, in respect of a “further publication” (such as the Minister’s post), “excerpts of proceedings are to be placed in context so as to avoid any misrepresentation”.

40. The question in respect of whether the Minister’s post constitutes a contempt pursuant to section 58(3) of the POQ Act is, then, whether the excerpt of proceedings published on the Minister’s social media pages was placed in context so as to avoid any misrepresentation.

41. That question must be answered in the affirmative. The post depicts the Minister on her feet, speaking in Parliament. It depicts the interjection by the Member which, for the reasons set out in paragraphs [26] to [29] above, was both disrespectful and disorderly. It demonstrates that the interjection was regarded as such by the Minister, her colleagues and the Speaker, who warned the Member. Taken together, the video and the caption amount to a clear criticism of the Member’s conduct. No further context was required and no misrepresentation was occasioned by the publishing of the short excerpt.

42. Indeed, inclusion of the further context (that is, the question posed by the Member for Scenic Rim Jon Krause, and the Minister’s attempts to answer that question before the Member’s interjection) would have demonstrated that, even before the Member’s interjection, the Minister’s attempt to answer the question was hampered by excessive interjections, including from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. In this way, the further context would have shown the Member’s interjection did not occur out of the blue, but against the background of earlier, repeated interjections. The further context would only have highlighted the disrespectful and disorderly nature of the Member’s interjection, coming as it did after a number of earlier interjections which prevented the Minister from answering the question that had been asked of her.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-the-Assembly/Live-and-Archived-Broadcasts/Terms-and-conditions>.

43. The Member has complained that the post contained an implication that the Member had, by her interjection, made an attack on women. As noted above, the post contains no such implication. The post does not misrepresent the Member as having done so.

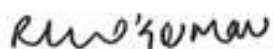
**Conclusion as to whether there has been a contempt pursuant to section 58 of the POQ Act**

44. There has been no contempt pursuant to section 58(3) of the POQ Act because the excerpt of proceedings contained sufficient context so as to avoid any misrepresentation.

**FURTHER SUBMISSIONS AND ASSISTANCE**

45. The Committee's 14 June 2024 letter to the Minister does not identify any particular way in which the Committee is considering that there has been a contempt other than the post was potentially misleading in that it did not provide context to the Minister's interjection.
46. That is to say, the Committee has not articulated a particular meaning which might be given to the post which renders it misleading. If the Committee considers any such meaning is potentially open (other than, as the Member has asserted, that the post misleadingly implies that the Member made an attack on women), please notify me so that further submissions may be made. Such further submissions would be necessary to afford the Minister natural justice in respect of this matter, as required by Standing Order 270(6).
47. If the Committee has any questions with respect to this submission, or otherwise requires any further assistance, I would be pleased to assist the Committee.

Yours faithfully,



Ruth O'Gorman KC

their own home. It will also mean, I am very hopeful, as is the Maternal and Perinatal Quality Council, that it will reduce the incidence of women free birthing, which is where women make the choice to birth at home with no medical support which is incredibly dangerous. It is very often not safe and can have devastating consequences.

That is why we are investing in home birthing for the first time in Queensland. It is why we will continue to invest in midwifery group practice. It is why we will continue to do the hard work to bring birthing services back to the cape. It was wonderful to be in the Far North to announce that birthing was back at Weipa. I met a local mum, Liz, who talked about having to go to Atherton to have her babies and how happy she was that now she can give birth in her home town of Weipa, which she loves, and where she can have her family and supports with her.

### Integrity Framework

**Ms LUI:** My question is of the Premier. Can the Premier advise the House on how the Miles Labor government is continuing to strengthen the integrity framework in Queensland, and is the Premier aware of any risky alternative approaches?

**Mr MILES:** I thank the member for Cook for her question. Thanks to the actions of our government, Queensland has amongst the toughest lobbying laws in the country. We have acted to make them even stronger, including through our recent prohibition on the practice of dual hatting. Let me be clear: lobbyists have a legitimate role in our democracy, but it is important that they are properly regulated. It is important that the public has information that there is transparency about lobbying activities. It is important that that transparency does not apply just to lobbying of the government. Lobbyists and their clients have interests in lobbying oppositions, too. During the last sitting week, we discovered that the LNP had been exploiting a loophole in our lobbying laws in order to secretly meet with lobbyists. For three years now, they have been using a loophole to meet lobbyists in a way—

**Mr Mander** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Everton, please withdraw that language.

**Mr MANDER:** I withdraw.

**Mr MILES:** For three years now, shadow ministers have been exploiting a loophole to deny the public knowledge about them being lobbied. If those opposite have nothing to hide in those activities, I can advise the House I have written to the Leader of the Opposition and asked him to support retrospective changes to our lobbying laws so that the public can know exactly what secret lobbying has occurred through the LNP exploiting this loophole. This is not something I take lightly. Retrospectively legislating is a serious matter and that is why I have asked the Leader of the Opposition for his support before I do this. I am sure that, after all of the statements the Leader of the Opposition has made about integrity and about lobbyists, he will support my request to introduce retrospective legislation so that the public can be aware of any secret lobbying that has occurred over those three years. The fact is that if you want to call yourself the premier-elect and if you want to talk about integrity, you have to put your money where your mouth is and you have to act with integrity, too. He cannot just demand it from others. I look forward to advising the House of the Leader of the Opposition's response.

### Maternity Services

**Mr KRAUSE:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister confirm that Beaudesert Hospital's maternity unit was bypassed almost every week across December, January and February, with patients being referred to Logan Hospital? Why didn't the Minister tell the mums of Beaudesert about the bypass happening on her watch?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. It is very pleasing that we do have birthing services back at Beaudesert, as I said. Particularly over the Christmas period, there are very small amounts of time where sometimes staff absences mean—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Over the Christmas period there are times when staff take leave, but we work with the patients. The hardworking staff do deserve a break at Christmas time and we work with local mothers to make sure they are supported.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** If I can get a word in, Mr Speaker, can I say that all of those mums—

**Ms Bates:** Cross your legs!

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Mudgeeraba, you are warned under the standing orders. I ask you to withdraw that comment.

**Ms BATES:** I withdraw.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for McConnel. We do not need any assistance.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Rather than creating unnecessary fear in the community, what happens is that we work with any expectant mums—

**Mrs Gerber:** Cover it up.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I absolutely reject that assertion from the member for Currumbin that we are covering anything up. This is made public. The HHS works with local families—

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, member for Kawana! Pause the clock. Minister, you have one minute and 23 seconds remaining; do you have anything further to add?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I do, Mr Speaker. It is absolutely outrageous for those opposite to come in here and create fear for expectant mums in the community. I want to be very clear that hospital and health services work with expectant mums and the community. Sometimes they may be on bypass for 24 hours and no patients are impacted. Sometimes, if birthing services are required from Beaudesert, we will work with a small number of women who, with their midwives, go to Logan Hospital. We work with the Rural Doctors Association, the AMA and our nurses and midwives to make sure those women are supported. As members opposite well know—because when in government they did a lot of work with the Rural Doctors Association to bring birthing back to Beaudesert—it has to be safe. We work very hard with the obstetricians and midwives to ensure birthing services remain at Beaudesert. Information around what happens from time to time, for short periods, is always publicly available and it is well communicated to the community and to families. I reject that wholeheartedly and ask those opposite to stop causing fear in the community.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Premier will please stop interjecting at one another across the chamber.

### Frontline Services

**Ms McMILLAN:** My question is of the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier outline how the Miles Labor government is delivering the services Queenslanders deserve for our growing state, and is the Deputy Premier aware of any risky alternatives?

**Mr DICK:** I thank the member for Mansfield her question. The member for Mansfield was a distinguished educator in the public education system in Queensland before her entry to this place. The member for Mansfield knows, as all members of our government know, that our government is committed to ensuring Queensland's frontline keeps up with the pace of growth in our state's population. That means having the nurses, teachers and police officers to staff the hospitals, the schools and the police stations our growing state needs. The member for Mansfield also understands that, when the LNP whinges about public sector growth—the growth in wages, the cost of public servants—we know that means one thing: the LNP is really complaining about the number of teachers, nurses and police officers and whether they should get a decent wage for the work they do.

We saw it last week in the LNP's federal budget reply speech. Peter Dutton has the jobs of 36,000 public servants in his sights. He compared that number to the Australian Defence Force. Let's talk about how the LNP treats the Defence Force. This week, in nine newspapers Shane Wright laid bare how frontline Public Service job cuts hurt those very defence personnel. Under the federal LNP government, the processing time for defence veteran support claims blew out on average by 435 days, that is, one year and two months. Queenslanders remember that Peter Dutton was a defence minister in that government. That processing time blew out. Why? It blew out because they outsourced that work to labour hire companies. That is what the LNP does.

I say this about all the bleating from the Leader of the Opposition and all the members of the LNP: that was an absolutely disgusting way to treat the veterans who served this country with such distinction and honour. It was an absolutely disgusting way to treat them. I can assure members of this: