



QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT **COMMITTEES**

Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee



Report No. 8

58th Parliament, January 2026

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Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee

Chair	Mr James Lister MP, Member for Southern Downs
Deputy Chair	Mrs Margie Nightingale MP, Member for Inala
Members	Mr Adam Baillie MP, Member for Townsville
	Mr Mark Boothman MP, Member for Theodore
	Mr Michael Healy MP, Member for Cairns
	Ms Joan Pease MP, Member for Lytton

Committee Secretariat

Telephone	(07) 3553 6657
Email	LGBCSC@parliament.qld.gov.au
Committee Webpage	www.parliament.qld.gov.au/LGBCSC

All references and webpages are current at the time of publishing.

Acknowledgements

The committee acknowledges the assistance provided by the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers.

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Chair's Foreword

This report presents a summary of the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee's examination of the Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025.

The committee's task was to consider the policy to be achieved by the legislation and the application of fundamental legislative principles - that is, to consider whether the Bill has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals, and to the institution of Parliament. The committee also examined the Bill for compatibility with human rights in accordance with the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the staff of the Queensland Parliamentary service for their assistance in the examination of the Bill, and acknowledge the participation of the Members for Pine Rivers, Ferny Grove, Greenslopes, Sandgate and Logan, who appeared as substitute committee members during the course of the committee's work.

I also thank those individuals and organisations who made written submissions on the Bill and the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers.

I commend this report to the House.



James Lister MP

Chair

Executive Summary

On 20 November 2025, the Honourable Ann Leahy MP Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers, introduced the Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 (the Bill) into the Queensland Parliament. The Bill was referred to the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee (committee) for detailed consideration.

The overarching policy objectives of the Bill are to:

- empower councils
- empower mayors
- improve the councillor conflicts of interest and register of interests frameworks
- reduce unnecessary red tape and regulation
- provide certainty to councillors about matters relating to remuneration, leaves of absence, vacation of office, and eligibility
- promote good governance and decision-making
- enhance safeguards for local government election candidates and participants
- make various minor, administrative and/or technical amendments.

The committee received and considered evidence including: 68 submissions, a written briefing, 2 oral briefings from the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers, and heard evidence from key stakeholders, including councils, at a public hearing.

Key issues raised by stakeholders concerned the following proposals in the Bill:

- the appointment of 'senior executive employees' by a panel consisting of the mayor, CEO and deputy mayor or committee chairperson
- changes to the conflicts of interest and register of interests frameworks
- removing conduct breaches from the councillor conduct framework
- changes to mandatory training requirements for councillors
- the automatic removal from office of a councillor upon nomination as a candidate for the Legislative Assembly.

The committee is satisfied that the Bill gives sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and the institution of Parliament as required by the *Legislative Standards Act 1992*.

Further, the committee is satisfied that the Bill is compatible with human rights as defined in the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

The committee made 1 recommendation, found at page vi of this report.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 4

The committee recommends that the Bill be passed.

Glossary

BCC	Brisbane City Council
CBR	City of Brisbane Regulation 2012
CCFQ	Civil Contractors Federation Queensland
CEO	chief executive officer
COBA	<i>City of Brisbane Act 2010</i>
COI	conflict/s of interest
CRC	Cairns Regional Council
CTRC	Charters Towers Regional Council
DLGWV	Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers (the department)
DRFA	Disaster recovery funding arrangements
ECQ	Electoral Commission Queensland
FLP	Fundamental Legislative Principle
HRA	<i>Human Rights Act 2019</i>
LGA	<i>Local Government Act 2009</i>
LGAQ	Local Government Association of Queensland
LGEA	<i>Local Government Electoral Act 2011</i>
LGR	Local Government Regulation 2012
LSA	<i>Legislative Standards Act 1992</i>
MPI	material personal interest
OIA	Office of the Independent Assessor
PIASC	Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council

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1. Overview of the Bill

The Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 (the Bill) was introduced by the Honourable Ann Leahy MP Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers and was referred to the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee (the committee) by the Legislative Assembly on 20 November 2025.

1.1. Aims of the Bill

The Bill seeks to amend the *City of Brisbane Act 2010* (COBA), the *City of Brisbane Regulation 2012* (CBR), the *Local Government Act 2009* (LGA), the *Local Government Regulation 2012* (LGR) and the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* (LGEA).

According to the explanatory notes, the Bill aims to re-empower Queensland's 77 local governments by reducing red tape and providing councils the resources and legislative framework to deliver for their communities.¹

To this end, the Bill aims to:

- empower councils by:
 - providing that senior executive employees of a local government are appointed by a panel of the local government, rather than solely by the chief executive officer (CEO)
 - providing that Brisbane City Council (BCC) appoints its senior contract employees, rather than the CEO
 - facilitating local government access to essential State-owned quarry materials
 - clarifying Indigenous local government rating powers and provide a framework to facilitate Indigenous local government rating in the future
- empower mayors by:
 - reinforcing that the mayor is the official spokesperson of a local government
 - clarifying that the mayor is the default chairperson of ordinary and special meetings of a local government, and committees for which the mayor is the chairperson
- improve and simplify the councillor conflicts of interest and register of interests frameworks
- reduce unnecessary red tape and regulation
- provide certainty to councillors about matters relating to remuneration, leaves of absence, vacation of office, and eligibility

¹ Explanatory notes, p 1.

- promote good governance and decision making
- enhance safeguards for local government election candidates and participants
- make minor, administrative and technical amendments.²

1.2. Background

The Bill is the first phase of the Queensland Government's reform program and includes a suite of amendments which address priority issues identified by the local government sector and stakeholders including the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) and the BCC, and the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers' (DLGWV) review of the LGA.³

According to the DLGWV (the department), the Bill intends to create an environment where the local government sector is empowered, including through fit for purpose legislation, and ensuring local government is held to high levels of integrity and accountability, while enabling councillors to serve their community without unnecessary regulatory burden.⁴

1.3. Consultation

The explanatory notes state that the department undertook targeted consultation with key stakeholders on proposed amendments in the Bill, including:

- BCC
- LGAQ
- Local Government Managers Association (Queensland)
- Electoral Commission Queensland (ECQ)
- Office of the Independent Assessor (OIA)
- Local Government Remuneration Commission
- Queensland Parliamentary Service.⁵

According to the explanatory notes, the proposed amendments are generally supported. However, certain stakeholders raised concerns about the following proposed amendments:

- providing that 'senior executive employees' of a local government are appointed by a panel consisting of the mayor, CEO and deputy mayor or committee chairperson

² Explanatory notes, p 1; p 4; Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers (DLGWV), written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 2.

³ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 1.

⁴ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 1.

⁵ Explanatory notes, p 43.

- providing that ‘senior contract employees’ (including at the General Manager level) at BCC are appointed by the council
- removing conduct breaches from the councillor conduct framework
- removing the mandatory training requirements for sitting councillors or candidates
- proposed conflicts of interest framework, and
- providing for the automatic removal from office of a councillor upon nomination as a candidate for the Legislative Assembly.⁶

The explanatory notes state that the issues raised by stakeholders were considered during the drafting of the Bill.⁷

1.4. Inquiry process

The committee received and considered the following evidence:

- 68 written submissions from stakeholders
- a written briefing provided by the DLGWV on 5 December 2025
- public briefings provided by the DLGWV on 10 December 2025 and 16 January 2026
- evidence provided at a public hearing in Brisbane on 16 January 2026
- a written response to stakeholder submissions provided by the DLGWV on 14 January 2026.

This evidence is available on the committee’s webpage.

1.5. Legislative compliance

The committee’s deliberations included assessing whether the Bill complies with the requirements for legislation as contained in the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, the *Legislative Standards Act 1992* (the LSA),⁸ and the *Human Rights Act 2019* (the HRA).⁹



1.5.1. Legislative Standards Act 1992

Assessment of the Bill’s compliance with the LSA identified the following issues which are analysed in Section 2—whether the:

- legislation has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals in relation to:
 - the appropriateness of the delegation of legislative power in respect of a range of proposed regulation-making powers in the Bill
 - the proportionality and relevance of proposed new offences

⁶ Explanatory notes, pp 43-44.

⁷ Explanatory notes, p 44.

⁸ *Legislative Standards Act 1992* (LSA).

⁹ *Human Rights Act 2019* (HRA).

- legislation has sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament in relation to the delegation of legislative power.

The committee is satisfied that the explanatory notes tabled with the Bill comply with the requirements of Part 4 of the LSA. The explanatory notes contain a sufficient level of information, background and commentary to facilitate understanding of the Bill's aims and origins.



1.5.2. Human Rights Act 2019

Assessment of the Bill's compatibility with the HRA identified issues with the following, which are analysed further in Section 2:

- the right to freedom of expression
- the right to privacy and reputation
- the right to take part in public life.

The committee assessed the Bill's compatibility with the HRA. While the Bill limits various human rights, the limits are proportionate and justifiable. The committee concluded that the Bill is compatible with human rights.

A statement of compatibility was tabled with the introduction of the Bill as required by section 38 of the HRA. The statement contained a sufficient level of information to facilitate understanding of the Bill in relation to its compatibility with human rights.

1.6. Should the Bill be passed?

The committee is required to determine whether or not to recommend that the Bill be passed.



Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Bill be passed.

2. Examination of the Bill

This section discusses key themes which were raised during the committee's examination of the Bill.

2.1. Senior executive employees to be appointed by a panel

Currently, the LGA provides that the CEO is responsible for the appointment of council employees, including senior executive employees, in line with the organisational structure determined by the council.¹⁰ The Bill proposes to give mayors and councillors greater involvement in the appointment of senior council staff.¹¹

A senior executive employee is defined as a local government employee who reports directly to the CEO and ordinarily is considered a senior position.¹²

¹⁰ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 2.

¹¹ DLGWV, public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 10 December 2025, p 2.

¹² DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 2.

The Bill proposes to amend the LGA to provide that senior executive employees are appointed by a panel constituted by the following persons:

- the mayor
- the CEO, and
- either:
 - if the senior executive employee is to report to only 1 committee of the local government – the chairperson of the committee, or
 - otherwise – the deputy mayor.¹³

The Bill provides that if the deputy mayor or chairperson is unable to take part in the panel, the local government must appoint another councillor to replace them on the panel.¹⁴

The department advised that while the local government will be responsible for appointments, the CEO will remain responsible for the management, direction and discipline of senior executive employees, including dismissal.¹⁵

The COBA already provides that BCC is responsible for the appointment of executive employees, with the CEO responsible for the appointment of other council employees. However, the Bill proposes to amend the COBA to provide that the council is also responsible for the appointment of ‘senior contract employees’, defined as employees who are employed on a contractual basis and classified by the council as senior executive service. This includes council employees down to the General Manager level at the council.¹⁶



2.1.1. Stakeholder Submissions

Some stakeholders supported the proposal to give mayors and councillors greater involvement in the appointment of senior council staff.¹⁷ Submitters identified the following advantages of the proposed amendments:

- it may strengthen alignment with community priorities and could provide elected members oversight of strategic leadership roles¹⁸
- including elected representatives on recruitment panels strengthens accountability and improves recruitment outcomes by ensuring alignment between strategic direction, leadership capability and community expectations.¹⁹

¹³ Bill, cl 69.

¹⁴ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 2.

¹⁵ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 2.

¹⁶ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 3.

¹⁷ Submission 27, p 2; submission 44, p 3.

¹⁸ Submission 9, p 1.

¹⁹ Submission 17, p 1.

However, submitters raised a range of concerns about the proposal, including:

- the proposal risks introducing nepotism and politicising a process that should be objective and merit-based²⁰
- elected representatives may not want to be involved in appointments for reasons including: to maintain their independence, time commitments, possible conflicts of interest, lack of expertise or concern their involvement might exacerbate tensions in council²¹
- the proposal is fraught with risk while offering no improvement to the current practice and may undermine the authority of the CEO²²
- mandating a selection panel comprising the mayor, deputy mayor and CEO means that most panels will lack diversity and may not include the mix of skills and approaches good governance requires for recruitment processes²³
- the proposed amendments blur the demarcation between strategic leadership and operational management and without clear protocols, the panel could enable undue influence, conflicts of interest, favouritism and misuse of authority, particularly where senior executive roles then work closely with elected officials²⁴
- a more flexible approach would better support the sector.²⁵

To minimise the perceived risks, submitters made the following recommendations:

- that guidance materials be developed for senior executive recruitment panels that define the scope of the panel's role, reinforce merit-based selection principles and embed probity safeguards (e.g. processes for declaring and managing conflicts of interest (COI) and ensuring independent oversight of recruitment decisions)²⁶
- that the intent of s 196(3) of the LGA (i.e. that the CEO appoints local government employees) be retained with the CEO being the chair of recruitment panels and the 'appointer' of any senior executive positions²⁷
- that councillors are provided the opportunity to opt-out to enable them to manage issues such as conflicts, time pressures or personal preference²⁸
- that the Bill be amended to include a provision to allow councils to delegate responsibility for recruiting senior officers to the CEO to accommodate those councils that wish to maintain the status quo²⁹

²⁰ Submission 3, p 1; submission 4, p 1; submission 9, p 1; submission 21, p 2; submission 30, p 2.

²¹ Submission 7, p 1.

²² Submission 7, p 2.

²³ Submission 7, p 2; submission 24, p 3.

²⁴ Submission 26.

²⁵ Submission 34, p 16.

²⁶ Submission 9, p 1; submission 62, p 5; submission 42, p 8.

²⁷ Submission 16, pp 1-2; submission 24, p 1.

²⁸ Submission 16, pp 1-2.

²⁹ Submission 34, p 16.

- that the Bill be amended to allow the local government to nominate an alternative councillor, not just in instances of absence, with relevant subject matter expertise to participate on a senior executive appointment panel, in place of the deputy mayor.³⁰



2.1.2. Department Advice

Guidance materials and conflicts of interest risks

The department advised that it will develop training and guidance materials to support local governments in establishing and operating appointment panels for senior executive employees. These materials will cover issues such as how to manage COI and confidentiality requirements in relation to appointment processes. The department also advised that it expects local governments will adopt their own policies regarding appointment panel processes that comply with the LGA.³¹

In relation to COI risks:

- the department noted that there are existing safeguards in place to ensure that councillors perform their roles on appointment panels in an honest, impartial and transparent manner³²
- several elements of the councillor conduct framework will also continue to require councillors to fulfil their appointment panel responsibilities with honesty and integrity (e.g. that councillors engage in misconduct if their conduct adversely affects the honest and impartial fulfilment of their responsibilities, and that corrupt conduct continues to be prohibited by the *Crime and Corruption Act 2001*)³³

Panel flexibility and diversity

With respect to concerns about flexibility and diversity on panels, the department advised that while the Bill proposes to prescribe the membership of the panel, local governments would still have significant discretion and flexibility in relation to their operation.³⁴

Further, the department advised that:

- it notes the continued work of the local government sector, including the LGAQ, to encourage people from diverse backgrounds to stand for election to local government
- the Bill will not affect appointment panels' ability to obtain technical advice relevant to the appointment of senior executive employees to technical roles.³⁵

³⁰ Submission 44, p 3.

³¹ DLGWV, response to submissions, pp 2-3.

³² DLGWV, response to submissions, p 6; The local government principles at s 4 of the LGA provide that in that in performing a function under the Act, a councillor must ensure transparent and effective processes and decision making in the public interest and that their behaviour is ethical and legal.

³³ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 6.

³⁴ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 4.

³⁵ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 5.

Role of the CEO

In relation to concerns about the role of the CEO, the department advised that the Bill does not make any changes to the arrangements for the day-to-day management of local government employees under the LGA, including senior executive employees appointed by a panel. The department added that a local government's CEO will continue to be responsible for the management, direction and discipline of all employees, including senior executive employees.³⁶

Committee comment



The committee supports the Bill's proposal to prescribe the composition of appointment panels for senior executive employees of local governments. The committee acknowledges concerns raised by some submitters about the practical operation of the proposed panels and possible integrity issues.

The committee notes that the department has advised it will develop training and guidance materials to support local governments in establishing and operating appointment panels for senior executive employees. The committee also notes the safeguards already in place to ensure that councillors perform their roles in an honest, impartial and transparent manner.

The committee encourages the department to work closely with the sector to implement the proposed framework, should the Bill be passed.

2.2. Local government access to State-owned quarry materials

According to the explanatory notes, the policy objective of the proposed amendments is to facilitate local government access to essential State-owned quarry materials by amending the LGA.³⁷

The Bill seeks to clarify the operation of provisions concerning the giving of reasonable entry notices, particularly those which enable local governments to access and remove materials, including quarry materials such as gravel, from State-owned land.³⁸

It is proposed that a reasonable entry notice be given to the owner and occupier of the relevant land within a reasonable period prior to entry, rather than at least 7 days before the property is proposed to be entered, as is currently the case.³⁹

³⁶ DLGWW, response to submissions, p 4.

³⁷ Explanatory notes, p 3.

³⁸ Bill, cls 55-59; explanatory notes, p 3.

³⁹ Explanatory notes, p 3.



2.2.1. Stakeholder Submissions and Department Advice

Stakeholders were supportive of the proposal to clarify reasonable entry notices and timing under s 143 of the LGA.⁴⁰ However, some submitters raised the importance of developing template notices and best practice materials to support the implementation of the proposed amendments.⁴¹

In response to these suggestions, the department advised it intends to update existing guidance on the use of s 143 of the LGA to reflect the proposed amendments.⁴²

2.3. Clarifying rating powers for Indigenous local governments

The Bill proposes to amend the LGA and the LGR to clarify the current policy position that Queensland's 14 Indigenous local governments as well as Aurukun Shire Council and Mornington Shire Council must not levy general, special or separate rates (i.e. rates that rely on a valuation of land).⁴³

The Indigenous local governments defined at Schedule 4 of the LGA are:

Cherbourg	Napranum
Doomadgee	Palm Island
Hope Vale	Pormpuraaw
Kowanyama	Woorabinda
Lockhart River	Wujal Wujal
Mapoon	Yarrabah
Torres Strait Island Regional Council	Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council

Currently under the LGA, each local government must levy general rates on all rateable land within the local government area, and may levy special rates and charges, utility charges, and separate rates and charges.⁴⁴ However, provisions of the LGR ultimately prevent Indigenous local governments from levying general rates, special rates and separate rates.⁴⁵ The Bill proposes to omit the relevant section from the LGR.⁴⁶

According to the explanatory notes, land tenure arrangements in Aurukun and Mornington Shire Councils are comparable to those of Indigenous local governments, making it impracticable to levy rates in those local government areas. As a result, exemptions from

⁴⁰ Submission 7, p 3; submission 9, p 2; submission 13, p 1; submission 23, p 4; submission 27, p 1; submission 30, p 1; submission 43, p 3.

⁴¹ Submission 9, p 2; submission 34, p 5.

⁴² DLGWV, response to submissions, p 8.

⁴³ Bill, cl 54, new s 94A; DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 3.

⁴⁴ LGA, s 94.

⁴⁵ Local Government Regulation 2012 (LGR), s 71(2).

⁴⁶ Bill, cl 117.

annual land valuation requirements under the *Land Valuation Act 2010* have routinely been sought for the land in these local government areas.⁴⁷

The department advised that due to some recent changes in land tenure, and emerging commercial activities in the Aurukun and Mornington Shire Council areas, these local governments may wish to commence a rating program in the medium term.⁴⁸ The Bill proposes to provide flexibility for these local governments to levy rates in the future, should it be practicable to do so.⁴⁹



2.3.1. Stakeholder Submissions

Stakeholders supported the proposal to clarify rating powers for Indigenous local governments.⁵⁰ Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council (PIASC) voiced its strong support for these provisions in the Bill noting the reforms speak directly to the commitments made under the Equal Partners in Government Agreement, which recognises the right of First Nations councils to govern with clarity, authority and cultural legitimacy.⁵¹

PIASC recommended that the Bill be accompanied by a framework which provides:

- clear legislative authority for rating across all land tenures, including community leasehold and social housing arrangements
- guidance on implementation, including model policies and legal support
- recognition of the unique governance and tenure contexts in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.⁵²



2.3.2. FLP Issue – Delegation of power, regulation-making powers

The Bill proposes amendments that provide for certain matters to be addressed in subordinate legislation, including to provide for a regulation to prescribe local governments that are not permitted to levy general, special or separate rates.

Whether a Bill has sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament depends on whether, for example, the Bill allows the delegation of legislative power only in appropriate cases and to appropriate persons.⁵³ Also, whether the Bill sufficiently subjects the exercise of a delegated legislative power to the scrutiny of the Legislative Assembly.⁵⁴

The explanatory notes set out the rationale for the delegation of legislative power, stating that by including the amendments in the LGR, the Bill will accommodate circumstances where it may be appropriate for one or more local government to be removed from the prescribed list, according to their capacity to do so.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Explanatory notes, p 4.

⁴⁸ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 4.

⁴⁹ Explanatory notes, p 4.

⁵⁰ Submissions 13, 27, 30, 34, 43, 46, 66.

⁵¹ Submission 66, p 4.

⁵² Submission 66, p 4.

⁵³ LSA, s 4(4)(a).

⁵⁴ LSA, s 4(4)(b).

⁵⁵ Explanatory notes, p 41.

Regulations made in accordance with the proposed delegations would be subject to the usual tabling and disallowance procedures that apply in Queensland under the *Statutory Instruments Act 1992*.

Committee comment



The committee understands that changing circumstances in some Indigenous local governments may position them to commence a rating program in the future. Noting the flexibility afforded by the proposed delegation of legislative power, the committee is satisfied it is appropriate and has sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament, such that it is consistent with fundamental legislative principles.

2.4. Amendments to mayoral responsibilities

2.4.1. Mayor is the official spokesperson of local government

The Bill proposes to amend the LGA to provide that a mayor's responsibilities include being the official spokesperson of the local government about local government matters.⁵⁶ According to the department, this addresses an emergent issue, which has impacted the operation of several councils, about which councillor is authorised to be the official spokesperson.⁵⁷

The Bill also proposes to amend the LGA to clarify that all councillors may communicate with the community about local government matters, other than as the official spokesperson (i.e. in their capacity as a councillor).⁵⁸

2.4.2. Mayor is the default chairperson of ordinary and special meetings

The Bill also proposes to amend the LGA to clarify that the mayor of a local government is responsible for leading and managing meetings of the local government as chairperson, and any committee meetings for which the mayor is the chairperson. This role includes managing the conduct of the participants at the meetings.⁵⁹

Currently under the LGA, if the mayor is not present at a meeting of the local government and has not delegated their responsibility to chair the meeting, the acting mayor is the chairperson.⁶⁰

With respect to local government committees, the chairperson of a committee meeting will continue to be determined in accordance with s 267 of the LGR, whereby a local government may appoint the chairperson. If the local government does not appoint the chairperson, the committee may appoint one of its members as chairperson.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Bill, cl 49.

⁵⁷ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 5.

⁵⁸ Explanatory notes, p 61.

⁵⁹ Bill, cl 49(1); explanatory notes, p 60.

⁶⁰ LGA, s 165.

⁶¹ LGR, s 267.



2.4.3. Stakeholder Submissions

Some stakeholders supported the proposals in the Bill that seek to empower mayors.⁶² Submissions identified the following as advantages of the proposed changes:

- the amendments provide organisational clarity with respect to representation and meeting control⁶³
- mayors are elected by their communities, and it is important their role is not diminished through internal policy or procedural workarounds.⁶⁴

Some submissions suggested the need for flexibility should the mayor be unavailable. For example, Cairns Regional Council (CRC) proposed that in such circumstances responsibility for acting official spokesperson for council should transfer to the deputy mayor.⁶⁵ CRC also recommended that where the mayor is unavailable to chair a meeting, the deputy mayor should be the default chairperson, rather than the mayor's delegate.⁶⁶

While supportive of the mayor as the official spokesperson, the LGAQ submitted that:

... it is equally important that councils retain the ability to set local policies relevant to their local circumstances with mayors retaining a discretion to allow others to act as spokesperson in circumstances as agreed or as set out in a council policy.⁶⁷

Some submissions raised concerns, including the following:

- reinforcing the mayor as the spokesperson must not encroach on the rights of councillors to publicly express their views⁶⁸
- legislative change is unlikely to remove the likelihood of residents viewing a divisional councillor as speaking on behalf of the local government.⁶⁹

Charters Towers Regional Council (CTRC) also stated its concern that the amendments appear to be prompted by a specific and isolated incident in Townsville. The CTRC added:

... we caution against legislative changes driven by exceptional cases that do not reflect the practices of most other councils in Queensland. Broad reforms should be evidence based and proportionate, ensuring they do not unintentionally impose unnecessary rigidity on councils that already operate effectively under existing frameworks.⁷⁰



2.4.4. Department Advice

Mayor is official spokesperson

In response to these concerns, the department advised that:

⁶² Submission 13, p 1; submission 28, p 1; submission 30, p 1; submission 46, p 2.

⁶³ Submission 7, p 3; submissions 9, p 2.

⁶⁴ Submission 17, p 1.

⁶⁵ Submission 24, p 1.

⁶⁶ Submission 24, p 1.

⁶⁷ Submission 34, p 18.

⁶⁸ Submission 38, p 1.

⁶⁹ Submission 43, p 5.

⁷⁰ Submission 9, p 2.

- under the Bill, mayors would have the discretion to delegate the role of council spokespersons to other councillors via their existing delegation power under the LGA (see s 258); and that this should allow for the tailoring of spokesperson arrangements, including media policies, to individual council circumstances⁷¹
- proposed new s 12(6) of the LGA puts beyond doubt that the proposed amendments do not prevent a councillor who is not the mayor from communicating with their community about local government matters.⁷²

Mayor is default chairperson of ordinary and special meetings

With respect to the mayor being the default chairperson of ordinary and special meetings, the department acknowledged the recommendation of the CRC that the deputy mayor should be the default chairperson, in circumstances where the mayor is absent or unavailable. The department advised it will consider this matter further, in consultation with the local government sector, and include any necessary amendments in a future Bill.⁷³

2.5. Councillor conflicts of interest and register of interest frameworks

2.5.1. Conflicts of interest

The Bill proposes to replace the current COI framework in the COBA and LGA with the framework that was in place from 2013 to early 2018, with some minor modifications, to provide additional COI exceptions for councillors and to clarify penalties for breaches.⁷⁴

In summary, the Bill proposes to amend the COBA and the LGA to:

- repeal the current COI framework which is based on the concepts of ‘prescribed conflicts of interest’ and ‘declarable conflicts of interest’⁷⁵
- reinstate the concepts of ‘material personal interest’ (MPI) and ‘conflict of interest’ with modifications to clarify the test for determining whether a councillor has a COI:
 - the Bill proposes that a councillor has a MPI in a matter, if the councillor or an associate of the councillor stands to gain a benefit or suffer a loss, either directly or indirectly, depending on the outcome of the consideration of the matter at a local government meeting.⁷⁶
- retain the current COI exceptions for councillors which have been requested by stakeholders, for example, small value gifts and hospitality, club memberships, religious beliefs and political affiliations; and the current ordinary business matters of a local government, including the development of whole of local government documents such as the budget and operational plan⁷⁷

⁷¹ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 8.

⁷² DLGWV, response to submissions, p 8.

⁷³ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 9.

⁷⁴ Explanatory notes, p 5.

⁷⁵ Explanatory notes, p 6.

⁷⁶ Bill, cl 107, new s 150EE(1).

⁷⁷ Explanatory notes, p 6.

- update the framework for dealing with breaches, including penalties:
 - serious breaches (that is, the intention to gain a benefit, or avoid a loss, for a councillor or someone else) – maximum penalty of 200 penalty units or 2 years imprisonment, and
 - other breaches – dealt with as ‘misconduct’ under the councillor conduct framework.⁷⁸

According to the explanatory notes, the proposed changes to the COI framework will have the following benefits:

- a focus on local government meetings where actual, binding decisions will be made by the local government
- removal of the requirement for non-conflicted councillors to vote on whether to allow a conflicted councillor to participate in decision making, which is open to political manipulation where councillors could be voted out based on their political views rather than the public interest
- removal of the concept of a ‘close personal relationship’ with a councillor from COI as it lacks specificity and in smaller communities could lead to councillors having a COI in nearly every decision, and
- removal of the duty on a councillor to report a belief or suspicion of another councillor’s conflict, which is open to misuse for political reasons and creates fear of possible reprisals.⁷⁹

2.5.2. Key differences between the current and proposed COI frameworks

At a public briefing, the committee queried what the proposed changes would mean for councillors declaring COI. The department advised that currently the LGA lists the prescribed circumstances in which a councillor would have a conflict:

That list includes where the councillor or a close associate has received a gift, a loan or travel or accommodation benefit over a prescribed threshold, which is currently over \$2,000, from an entity that has an interest in the matter before the council. That is the first on the list. The second part of the list is where the matter relates to a contract between the local government and a councillor or a close associate of a councillor. If you have one of those interests you automatically have a prescribed conflict of interest currently.⁸⁰

According to the department, a key difference is that the new framework removes the prescribed list approach and replaces it with a test which is similar to the MPI concept used previously. As it stands in the Bill, the test is:

⁷⁸ Explanatory notes, p 6.

⁷⁹ Explanatory notes, pp 5-6.

⁸⁰ DLGWV, public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 10 December 2025, p 4.

... if the councillor or an associate of the councillor stands to gain a benefit or suffer a loss, either directly or indirectly, depending on the outcome of the consideration of the matter at a local government meeting.⁸¹

The department clarified that a councillor would have a MPI in a matter related to an associate, only if they knew, or reasonably ought to know, about the associate's involvement in a matter. Should a MPI arise, a councillor would inform the meeting, leave the room and not take part in the vote.⁸²

The other key difference relates to the concept of a 'declarable COI' which the Bill proposes to repeal and replace with a 'COI'. The department advised that the main difference between these concepts is that:

... under the current framework, a councillor with a declarable conflict of interest must notify the CEO and other councillors of that conflict and then either the councillor can decide to voluntarily leave the meeting or the councillors at that meeting can decide by resolution whether the person should stay or leave the room ... Under the new framework, the councillor themselves will make the decision because they have the information available to them. That councillor must deal with their conflict in a transparent and accountable way.⁸³

The department advised that the test is essentially 'whether there is a conflict between a personal interest and the public interest which might lead to a decision that is contrary to the public interest'.⁸⁴ According to the department, the proposed test is a slightly lower threshold than the current test as there is not the necessity to be gaining a benefit.⁸⁵



2.5.3. Stakeholder Submissions

Stakeholders had mixed views about the Bill's proposal to replace the current COI framework.

Some submitters supported the reintroduction of the former MPI and COI provisions.⁸⁶ For example, the Civil Contractors Federation Queensland (CCFQ) submitted that the current framework is 'overly onerous'. CCFQ advised it has received repeated anecdotal feedback that the current framework has severely limited the capacity of contractors to engage with councillors and council officers about projects, without fear of reprisal or enlivening the current COI framework.⁸⁷

However, other submitters raised concerns, including:

- the current framework is supported by a clear, step by step guide which councillors are familiar with, and change will require retraining and create uncertainty⁸⁸

⁸¹ Explanatory notes, p 42.

⁸² DLGWV, public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 10 December 2025, pp 4-5.

⁸³ DLGWV, public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 10 December 2025, p 5.

⁸⁴ DLGWV, public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 10 December 2025, p 5.

⁸⁵ DLGWV, public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 10 December 2025, p 5.

⁸⁶ Submissions 22, 23, 27, 46.

⁸⁷ Submission 23, pp 3-4.

⁸⁸ Submission 24, pp 2-5.

- risks associated with removing provisions that manage conflicts outside statutory meetings and significant personal associations⁸⁹
- returning to the previous system will come at the expense of a loss in clarity and reintroduce an element of subjectivity⁹⁰
- while the intent is to simplify the COI framework, some of the changes introduce transparency gaps and weaken integrity and accountability in local government decision making.⁹¹

The OIA raised several concerns about the proposal to reintroduce the concepts of MPI and COI, specifically:

- the definition of MPI in the Bill should be revised, as below, to provide a clearer interpretation and explicitly capture concerning conduct more broadly and in line with community expectations:

*A councillor has a material personal interest in a matter if the councillor or an associate of the councillor could reasonably stand to gain a benefit or suffer a loss, either directly or indirectly, depending on the outcome of the consideration of the matter by a local government.*⁹²

- the removal of close personal relationships could create uncertainty for councillors leading to misunderstanding of the broader range of relationships that may lead to decisions contrary to the public interest⁹³
- significant gifts or loans are not clearly captured under the proposed framework⁹⁴
- the need for greater clarity around what constitutes an ‘official council engagement’⁹⁵
- there should be a minimum standard in the level of detail declared at meetings to safeguard the transparency of COI declared at meetings (as is currently required under s 150EQ(4) of the LGA).⁹⁶



2.5.4. Department Advice

Concerns that amendments weaken current accountability measures

In response to concerns that the proposed amendments weaken current accountability measures, the department advised that:

- the Queensland Government considers that the framework proposed in the Bill strikes a better balance between allowing councillors to get on with the job for which

⁸⁹ Submission 19, p 1.

⁹⁰ Submission 35, p 2.

⁹¹ Submission 26, p 3.

⁹² Submission 19, p 13.

⁹³ Submission 19, p 14.

⁹⁴ Submission 19, p 15.

⁹⁵ Submission 19, pp 15-16.

⁹⁶ Submission 19, pp 16-17.

they were elected and ensuring transparency and accountability and that decisions are made in the public interest, and

- that this is based on feedback from stakeholders indicating that the current framework is too complex and vulnerable to exploitation by councillors for political purposes.⁹⁷

The department elaborated that the proposed framework:

- is designed to ensure that councillors manage conflicts between their private interests and public duties, backed by significant penalties for councillors who breach the trust placed in them by their communities, and
- puts the onus on councillors to consider whether they have a conflict of interest in a matter, and to take appropriate action if they believe they have a real or perceived conflict, and
- recognises that other councillors of a local government are not necessarily better placed than a councillor themselves to determine if they can act in the public interest.⁹⁸

The department advised that it considers the Bill will remove unnecessary red tape to allow conflicts to be managed faster and will de-politicise the management of conflicts.⁹⁹

Definitions in the Bill

In response to concerns regarding the definition of a MPI, the department advised that it considers the drafting in the Bill sufficiently clear and reflective of the policy position of the Queensland Government that the COI framework should only apply to council meetings. The department added that this provision will be closely monitored, should it require further amendment.¹⁰⁰

In response to concerns about what constitutes an official council engagement, the department advised it will consider the matter further in consultation with the OIA and the local government sector and include any necessary amendments in a future Bill.¹⁰¹

In response to concerns raised about the removal of the 'close personal relationship' test from the definition of 'related party', the department advised that this responds to long-standing concern from several councils. Further, the department received feedback that the concept lacks specificity, and in smaller communities could lead to councillors having a conflict in nearly every decision. The department advised it will consider whether it is appropriate to amend the Bill to include a regulation-making power to specify additional persons as a related party.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 10.

⁹⁸ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 11.

⁹⁹ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 11.

¹⁰⁰ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 13.

¹⁰¹ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 14.

¹⁰² DLGWV, response to submissions, pp 14-15.

Minimum standard of information to be declared in a council meeting

In response to the OIA's proposal that the Bill prescribe minimum particulars to be declared by councillors declaring a COI at a meeting, the department advised:

- at a minimum, a councillor must inform the relevant meeting of their personal interest and, if the councillor participates in the meeting in relation to the matter, how the councillor intends to deal with the conflict.
- that the Bill also requires the local government record in minutes the following:
 - the name of the councillor with the real or perceived conflict
 - the nature of the personal interest, as described by the councillor that gave rise to the conflict of interest
 - how the councillor dealt with the real or perceived conflict
 - if the councillor voted on the matter, how they voted on the matter, and
 - how the majority of persons who were entitled to vote at the meeting voted on the matter.
- further information about how a councillor is to meet these statutory requirements will be provided in departmental training and guidance material.¹⁰³

Scope of the proposed new COI framework

The department acknowledged submitters' concerns about limiting the application of the COI framework to council meetings and the omission in the Bill of the prohibition on councillors influencing matters for which they are conflicted (as currently required under the LGA).

In response, the department advised that the new framework is focused on managing COI at meetings where councillors make decisions. The department added that councillors cannot direct local government employees, including in relation to matters where they have a MPI or a COI.¹⁰⁴

Committee comment



The committee supports the proposed new councillor conflicts of interest and register of interest frameworks. While some submitters have raised concerns, including about how to manage potential conflicts outside local government meetings, the committee considers that placing the onus on individual councillors strikes a more appropriate balance than the current framework.

The committee notes the concern amongst stakeholders about the level of training and support required to implement the proposed framework.

¹⁰³ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 15.

¹⁰⁴ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 16.

However, it understands that the department intends to develop training and guidance materials to support the proposed framework in consultation with the local government sector.

The committee encourages the department to work closely with the sector in considering feedback in relation to the efficacy of the proposed new framework, should it be implemented.



2.5.5. FLP Issue – New offences for serious breaches of MPI requirements, penalties

To have sufficient regard for the rights and liberties of individuals, the consequences of legislation should be relevant and proportionate.¹⁰⁵ In line with this, a penalty should be proportionate to the offence, and penalties within legislation should be consistent with each other.

The proposed new offences in the LGA and COBA for serious breaches of MPI requirements would be relevant if a matter was to be discussed at a council meeting, and a councillor has a MPI in the matter.¹⁰⁶ The councillor would be required to inform the meeting of the MPI, leave the meeting and stay away from the place while the matter is discussed and voted on.¹⁰⁷

If the councillor contravened these requirements, including by voting on the matter, with an intention to gain a benefit or avoid a loss for the councillor or someone else, the councillor would face a maximum penalty of 200 penalty units (\$33,380) or 2 years imprisonment.¹⁰⁸

The Bill's proposed offences are intended to address serious breaches of the MPI requirements.¹⁰⁹ That is, where there is an intention to gain a benefit, or avoid a loss, for a councillor or a third party.¹¹⁰

In considering whether the Bill has sufficient regard to fundamental legislative principles, it is useful to note that the proposed amendments:

- would not apply in relation to a councillor's personal interest in the specified exempt matters or to a councillor's interest in a matter if the interest is no greater than the personal interests in the matter of a significant proportion of persons in the relevant local government area¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ LSA, s 4(2)(a); Cf. Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee, *Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024*, Report No. 1, 58th Parliament, December 2024, p 36.

¹⁰⁶ Bill, cls 24 and 107.

¹⁰⁷ Bill, cls 24 and 107.

¹⁰⁸ Bill, cls 24 and 107.

¹⁰⁹ Explanatory notes, p 35.

¹¹⁰ Explanatory notes, p 35.

¹¹¹ Bill, cls 24 and 107.

- would limit the definition of a councillor's MPI so that such an interest in relation to an associate would only be captured if the councillor knows, or ought reasonably to know, about the associate's involvement in the matter¹¹²
- could result in disciplinary action being taken against a councillor where there is no intent to gain a benefit or avoid a loss for the councillor or a third party (i.e. contravention of the new MPI requirements without the requisite element of intent constitutes misconduct under the LGA)¹¹³
- would provide that the councillor would not contravene the new offence provisions by taking part in the meeting if the councillor has the specified ministerial approval and complies with all conditions on which the approval is given.¹¹⁴

These provisions limit the scope of the new offence provisions by exempting certain matters, limiting what is captured by a councillor's MPI, providing for less serious contraventions to be dealt with as misconduct subject to disciplinary measures, and providing for ministerial approvals to authorise certain conduct.

According to the explanatory notes, the proposed amendments update the framework for dealing with breaches, including penalties. Serious breaches would constitute an offence, and other breaches would be dealt with as 'misconduct' under the councillor conduct framework.¹¹⁵ The explanatory notes state that there are existing legislative provisions in the COBA and LGA that are consistent with the maximum penalty for the proposed new offences.¹¹⁶

The Bill also seeks to prescribe the proposed MPI offences as integrity offences, meaning that, if convicted, a person is disqualified from being a councillor for a period of 4 years.¹¹⁷ The explanatory notes assert that the consequences are:

*... substantial, but appropriate, to reflect the serious nature of the conduct being addressed and to ensure integrity in local government decision-making. They reflect the local government principles that decision-making must be in the public interest and supported by transparent and effective processes, and that behaviour of councillors must be ethical and legal.*¹¹⁸

¹¹² Bill, cls 24 and 107.

¹¹³ Bill, cls 24 and 107.

¹¹⁴ Bill, cls 24 and 107.

¹¹⁵ Explanatory notes, p 6.

¹¹⁶ Explanatory notes, p 35.

¹¹⁷ Bill, cls 28 and 111.

¹¹⁸ Explanatory notes, p 36.

Committee comment

Given the proposals to limit the scope of the new offences for serious breaches of MPI requirements to specified circumstances, and the consistency of the maximum penalties of the new offences with existing provisions in the COBA and LGA, the committee is satisfied that the consequences of the Bill are relevant and proportionate, such that they are consistent with fundamental legislative principles.

The committee is also satisfied that the consequences of prescribing the proposed MPI offences as integrity offences are relevant and proportionate because it is important that councillors act in the interests of their community, not their own.

**2.5.6. HRA Issues – Taking part in public life**

The Bill introduces the concept of a ‘MPI and a ‘COI.’ These terms are relevant from a human rights perspective because one of the corresponding offence provisions is an integrity offence, which is relevant to an individual’s ability to be qualified as a council member.¹¹⁹

As noted above, serious breaches of MPI requirements proposed under the Bill are prescribed as integrity offences; and, if a person commits an integrity offence under the LGA or COBA, they are disqualified from being a councillor for a period of 4 years. A councillor is also automatically suspended if they are charged with an integrity offence.¹²⁰

This limits the right to take part in public life by limiting the rights of individuals charged with, or convicted of, the new integrity offences to be elected and remain in public office, and the rights of the public to vote for them.¹²¹

According to the statement of compatibility, the purpose of this compliance provision is deterrence, as councillors risk losing their positions if they do not manage their COI appropriately.¹²² The statement of compatibility does not consider there to be a less restrictive way to achieve the required deterrent effect.¹²³

**2.5.7. HRA Issues – Privacy and reputation**

As noted above, the Bill provides that councillors must inform meetings about their MPIs in matters and must deal with real or perceived COI in meetings (including by informing the meeting of their personal interest in the matter). This involves a disclosure of their personal information, and potentially that of an associate or related party, limiting their right to privacy.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Statement of compatibility, p 14.

¹²⁰ LGA, s 153; *City of Brisbane Act 2010* (COBA), s 153.

¹²¹ Statement of compatibility, p 16.

¹²² Statement of compatibility, p 17.

¹²³ Statement of compatibility, p 17.

¹²⁴ Statement of compatibility, p 16.

Further, certain information must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting (e.g. the name of the councillor, nature of the interest).¹²⁵ This also impacts the right to privacy, noting that minutes of council meetings are made public.¹²⁶

According to the statement of compatibility, the purpose of the limitation on the right to privacy and reputation is to support transparent and accountable decision making.¹²⁷ The explanatory notes also state that this reflects the local government principles.¹²⁸

Committee comment



The committee is satisfied that:

- the Bill strikes the appropriate balance between the right to take part in public life and the deterrence purpose of these provisions, noting that while the right may be limited, it is important for councillors to be held to a high standard of integrity given their role as public officials and representatives of their communities, and
- any limitation on the right to privacy and reputation arising from these provisions is appropriately balanced against the need to ensure transparency and accountability in local government decision making.

2.5.8. Register of interests

Chapters 8, Part 5 of the CBR and the LGR each concern registers of interests for relevant persons, including councillors and persons related to councillors. A register of interests must contain the financial and non-financial particulars for an interest held by the person (see Schedule 3 of the CBR and Schedule 5 of the LGR). Local governments must make a copy of each councillor's register available for inspection at the council office.¹²⁹

The Bill proposes to refine the register of interests frameworks in the CBR and the LGR to align with the proposed new COI framework discussed at Section 2.5.1.

The Bill proposes to make the following complementary amendments to the CBR and the LGR:

- remove the concept of 'relevant term', and provide that the reporting term for a councillor (or a person related to a councillor) is the councillor's current term
- consolidate the interests that councillors must include in an extract of their register of interests and adjust the time those interests must be shown to the financial year.

¹²⁵ Bill, cls 24 and 107.

¹²⁶ Statement of compatibility, p 16.

¹²⁷ Statement of compatibility, p 16.

¹²⁸ Explanatory notes, p 36.

¹²⁹ Explanatory notes, p 6.

According to the department, the overall intent is:

- to provide that the reporting term for a councillor, or a person related to a councillor, is the councillor's current term
- for extracts of councillors' registers of interests, that particulars about gifts, donations and sponsored travel or accommodation benefits would only need to be shown for the financial year in which the gift or sponsored travel or accommodation benefit is received or the donation is made.¹³⁰



2.5.9. Stakeholder Submissions and Department Advice

Stakeholders had mixed views about the proposed changes to the register of interests framework for councillors.

Some submissions were supportive of the changes proposed in the Bill.¹³¹ However, some submissions raised concerns, for example:

- the proposed changes reduce historical transparency, making it harder to identify patterns of influence or conflicts over time¹³²
- there remains a level of uncertainty and lack of clarity regarding how the register of interests works in conjunction with the COI and how these effect declaration requirements.¹³³

In response to these concerns, the department advised that it will develop training and guidance materials about the Bill's proposed changes to support the local government sector, including for the revised register of interest requirements. The department added that these materials will be developed in consultation with the local government sector.¹³⁴

In relation to the shortening of the disclosure window, the department advised that:

*Reducing the reporting term for councillors' registers of interest to reduce red tape is a policy decision of the Queensland Government. It is considered that the revised arrangements appropriately balance integrity and accountability considerations with administrative simplicity.*¹³⁵



2.5.10. HRA Issues – Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression incorporates a right to freedom of information, and a positive right to access information held by government bodies.¹³⁶ The proposed amendments limiting the reporting periods for items to be included in the register or the extract may limit the freedom of expression, in that it would limit the public's right to access information.¹³⁷

¹³⁰ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 6.

¹³¹ Submissions 13, 30, 34, 38, 43.

¹³² Submission 26, p 3.

¹³³ Submission 34, p 13.

¹³⁴ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 18.

¹³⁵ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 18.

¹³⁶ Nicky Jones and Peter Billings, *An Annotated Guide to the Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld), para 4.296 (p 209); HRA s 21(2).

¹³⁷ Statement of compatibility, p 19.

According to the statement of compatibility, the purpose of the amendments is to ‘complement the new requirements about COI’.¹³⁸ It is also suggested that these amendments promote the right to privacy and reputation of councillors.¹³⁹ However, it is also clear that the proposed amendments would reduce the amount of information available to the public about these interests.

Committee comment



The committee is satisfied that any limitation on the right to freedom of expression in terms of access to information is appropriately balanced against the purpose of the limitations – to complement the new conflicts of interest framework proposed in the Bill.

2.6. Removing conduct breaches from councillor conduct framework

The Bill proposes to remove the conduct breach category from the *Code of Conduct for Councillors in Queensland* (Code of Conduct) to reflect feedback from the local government sector that it:

- is open to misuse on political and personal grounds with councillors required to determine whether a fellow councillor has breached the Code of Conduct
- has led to unwarranted reputational harm for councillors
- has significant cost implications for councils, including paying for independent investigations, and
- is a disproportionate way of dealing with lower-level councillor behavioural issues.¹⁴⁰

Section 150K of the LGA defines what is a conduct breach. The explanatory notes state that allegations of conduct breach are typically at the lower end of the scale and include minor matters such as allegations of disrespectful language and behaviour (standards of behaviour outlined in the Code of Conduct) and the failure to comply with a policy, procedure or resolution of the local government.¹⁴¹

The councillor conduct framework

The councillor conduct framework deals with councillors unsuitable meeting conduct; and complaints, notices and information about councillors suspected conduct breaches, misconduct and corrupt conduct. The system applies to all local governments in Queensland, including BCC.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Statement of compatibility, p 19.

¹³⁹ Statement of compatibility, p 19.

¹⁴⁰ Bill, cls 72-106; explanatory notes, p 8.

¹⁴¹ Explanatory notes, p 9.

¹⁴² Explanatory notes, p 8.

The Independent Assessor, the body responsible for assessing complaints about the behaviour of councillors, makes a preliminary assessment of all complaints, notices and information about councillor conduct before deciding how the conduct should be dealt with. As regards a suspected 'conduct breach', the Independent Assessor may refer the matter to the local government to deal with.

According to the explanatory notes:

- if proven, conduct breaches do not attract substantial penalties (typically a reprimand, an order for an apology or to undertake training)
- allegations of conduct breaches often have a disproportionate impact on councillor reputations and the operation of local governments, including negatively impacting working relationships
- while low in number, investigating and reporting on conduct breach allegations can divert significant time and resources from local governments.¹⁴³

Under the framework proposed in the Bill, conduct that falls within the current scope of conduct breaches will not be within the remit of the councillor conduct framework. The department advised that this means the OIA would only have jurisdiction to proceed with misconduct or corrupt conduct (where permitted by the Crime and Corruption Commission) and must dismiss other matters. However, inappropriate councillor behaviour may continue to be called out through other mechanisms, including public council meetings and the media.¹⁴⁴

Expanding the definition of 'misconduct'

To ensure that more serious types of councillor conduct currently captured by the definition of 'conduct breach' continue to be appropriately examined by the Independent Assessor, the Bill proposes to amend the LGA to include in the definition of 'misconduct', the conduct of a councillor that:

- is or involves repeated unreasonable behaviour directed at another person that causes a risk to the health or safety of the other person
- is or involves harassment of a sexual nature, including, for example, unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature and making a remark with a sexual connotation, or
- contravenes an order of the chairperson of a local government meeting for the councillor to leave and stay away from the place at which the meeting is being held.¹⁴⁵

The department advised that under the proposed framework:

- unsuitable meeting conduct by a councillor will still be dealt with by the chairperson of the meeting, including by reprimanding the councillor or ordering the councillor

¹⁴³ Explanatory notes, p 9.

¹⁴⁴ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 7.

¹⁴⁵ Explanatory notes, p 26.

to leave the meeting. Councillors will also be able to reprimand a chairperson if the chairperson's conduct is unsuitable meeting conduct.

- safeguards will also remain in place to address inappropriate councillor conduct towards local government employees. For example, where an employee is at risk of harm or their safety is threatened because of a councillor's conduct, the CEO has a duty to act under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and can give an enforceable direction to a councillor to protect the staff, if warranted.¹⁴⁶

Councillor conduct register

The LGA requires a local government to keep and publish an up-to-date register (councillor conduct register), covering matters such as orders about unsuitable meeting conduct and decisions about suspected conduct breaches.¹⁴⁷ For particular decisions, the LGA specifies that the councillor conduct register must include the following details:

- a summary of the decision and the reasons for the decision
- the name of the relevant councillor
- date of the decision.¹⁴⁸

However, currently, the name of the councillor whose conduct is the subject of the decision is only included if the local government or Councillor Conduct Tribunal decided the councillor engaged in a conduct breach or misconduct, or the councillor gives consent for their name to be included.¹⁴⁹ The Bill proposes to amend this provision to ensure that if a decision relates to an order made against a councillor for unsuitable meeting conduct, the councillor's name is included in the register.¹⁵⁰

2.6.1. Stakeholder Submissions and Department Advice

Stakeholders had mixed views about the proposal to remove conduct breaches from the councillor complaints framework. Some submissions supported the proposal, identifying benefits such as:

- removing conduct breaches would streamline the system by focusing the formal complaints process on serious misconduct¹⁵¹
- the changes would reduce the investigative burden on councils for minor matters¹⁵²
- prompt internal handling of matters that fall below the serious misconduct threshold can build cohesion and demonstrate commitment to acceptable behaviours.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 8.

¹⁴⁷ See LGA, ss 150DX, 150DY.

¹⁴⁸ LGA, s 150DY(2).

¹⁴⁹ LGA, s 150DY(2)-(3).

¹⁵⁰ Bill, cl 61.

¹⁵¹ Submission 24, p 3.

¹⁵² Submission 9, p 3.

¹⁵³ Submission 9, p 1.

Other stakeholders raised concerns, for example:

- while reducing administrative burden, removing the conduct breach category creates a significant risk that inappropriate behaviour may no longer be captured or addressed, slipping through the cracks entirely¹⁵⁴
- removing conduct breaches:
 - eliminates the clear instrument to deal with contraventions of council policies, procedures and resolutions (e.g. the use of personal email to conduct council business or using a council vehicle for personal use)¹⁵⁵
 - will remove the positive obligation to report breaches of the code of conduct and council policies, significantly reducing the OIA's visibility of councillor conduct issues¹⁵⁶
 - removes the opportunity for members of the community to raise concerns about the conduct of a councillor that falls outside the definition of unsuitable meeting conduct, misconduct or corrupt conduct.¹⁵⁷

With respect to the Bill's proposal to expand the definition of misconduct, the OIA submitted that, while it supports the purpose of capturing serious misbehaviour, the OIA is concerned that the adoption of behavioural concepts without adaptation 'risks operational complexity, evidentiary challenges, and uncertainty for both complainants and councillors, while potentially exposing investigative material to unintended legal use outside the disciplinary framework.'¹⁵⁸

The OIA elaborated:

The behavioural concepts, particularly bullying and sexual behaviour, closely mirror wording and thresholds established in other statutory frameworks, such as the Industrial Relations Act 2016 (Qld), the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth), the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld), and the Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld).

While these statutes are designed to regulate workplaces, civil rights, and human rights, their standards are not naturally aligned with the governance and accountability focus of councillor misconduct. Importing these external behavioural standards introduces significant interpretive, operational, and evidentiary complexity, creating practical challenges for investigations and prosecutions in the context of an overall protective and educative councillor conduct framework.¹⁵⁹

The OIA also submitted that the current drafting of the misconduct provision referring to 'honest and impartial' has created unnecessary interpretive complexity for the OIA. The OIA recommended that s 150L(1)(a) of the LGA be replaced with 'honest or impartial' (i.e. conduct of a councillor would amount to misconduct if it 'adversely affects, directly or

¹⁵⁴ Submission 49, p 2.

¹⁵⁵ Submission 19, p 7.

¹⁵⁶ Submission 19, p 8.

¹⁵⁷ Submission 50, p 1.

¹⁵⁸ Submission 19, p 9.

¹⁵⁹ Submission 19, p 9.

indirectly, the honest or impartial performance of the councillor's functions, or the exercise of the councillor's powers'.¹⁶⁰

The OIA contends that this relatively minor change would provide crucial clarity and avoid a construction that requires the conduct to be a cumulative failure of both honesty and impartiality.¹⁶¹

Managing inappropriate behaviour

In response to concerns about managing inappropriate councillor behaviour, the department advised that if the proposed amendments are enacted, there will be other mechanisms to address inappropriate councillor conduct, for example calling out behaviour in public council meetings (e.g. censure motions) and the media.¹⁶²

With respect to the Bill's removal of conduct breaches, the department reiterated that most conduct breaches are relatively minor in nature and that the local government sector has raised concerns with how breaches are investigated and decided. The department added that ultimately, it will be for the community to judge a councillor's behaviour at local government elections.¹⁶³

Definition of 'misconduct'

In response to the matters raised by the OIA, the department advised that the department will further consider the recommendations made by the OIA to ensure that the definition of misconduct captures the full range of serious behaviours and conduct which have the potential to adversely impact individuals and damage the reputation of individual councils, councillors and the local government system as a whole. The department stated amendments will also be considered with regard to s 150L(1)(a) of the LGA as recommended by the OIA.¹⁶⁴

Committee comment



The committee understands that the 'conduct breach' category in the *Code of Conduct for Councillors in Queensland* has had disproportionate impacts on individual councillors and councils, relative to the scale of the behaviour in question. The committee appreciates that these breaches are typically more minor in nature and supports their removal from the councillor conduct framework.

While some submitters have raised concerns about how to deal with inappropriate councillor behaviour that falls outside of the Bill's definitions for unsuitable meeting conduct, misconduct or corrupt conduct, the committee contends that there are other available avenues to deal with more minor infractions such as public council meetings.

¹⁶⁰ Submission 19, p 9.

¹⁶¹ Submission 19, p 9.

¹⁶² DLGWV, response to submissions, p 19.

¹⁶³ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 20.

¹⁶⁴ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 23.

The committee notes the department's intention to develop training and guidance materials in relation to the proposed removal of conduct breaches from the councillor conduct framework and encourages the department to work closely with the sector on this.



2.6.2. HRA Issues – Freedom of expression, taking part in public life

The Bill limits the right to freedom of expression and the right to take part in public life because it removes an avenue for individuals to make complaints about the behaviour of elected councillors.¹⁶⁵ Both of these rights are important to the participation of the public in affairs of the government. While the public can elect councillors in the first instance, their ability to continually express their will through making complaints is a form of participation.

The statement of compatibility argues that:

- the purpose of the limitation on these rights is to 'simplify the councillor conduct framework' and to 'empower councillors to confidently do their jobs to the best of their abilities'¹⁶⁶
- simplifying the framework will allow it to 'focus on more substantial issues of misconduct which pose greater governance, integrity and accountability concerns and impact on the public's trust in local government'¹⁶⁷
- despite the proposed removal of the conduct breach category, an individual still has recourse to make a complaint directly to a councillor or the local government, or voice their concerns in other ways (e.g. social media, traditional media outlets) or ultimately through their vote at an election.¹⁶⁸



2.6.3. HRA Issues – Privacy and reputation

The proposed amendment to the councillor conduct register limits the right to privacy and reputation of any councillors who have an order made against them for unsuitable meeting conduct, as their name will be included in the councillor conduct register which is publicly available.¹⁶⁹

The purpose of the provision is to ensure that all details about findings of unsuitable meeting conduct are included in the councillor conduct register.¹⁷⁰ Broader purposes are to provide transparency and accountability regarding the overall councillor conduct framework and to promote the right of freedom of expression for the public to access information about elected local government officials.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ Statement of compatibility, p 9.

¹⁶⁶ Statement of compatibility, p 9.

¹⁶⁷ Statement of compatibility, p 10.

¹⁶⁸ Statement of compatibility, p 10.

¹⁶⁹ Statement of compatibility, p 3.

¹⁷⁰ Statement of compatibility, p 3.

¹⁷¹ Statement of compatibility, p 3.

While acknowledging the limitation on the right to privacy and reputation, the statement of compatibility considers the impacts are mitigated as councillors have a ‘diminished expectation of privacy’ as elected representatives and public officials.¹⁷² Further, before assuming office, a councillor commits to complying with the local government principles together with the standards of behaviour set out in the councillor Code of Conduct.¹⁷³

Committee comment



The committee is satisfied that:

- the Bill balances the limitations on the freedom of expression and the right to take part in public life with the purpose of the amendments, noting the alternative pathways in place for individuals to make complaints and that more serious conduct breaches are still reportable under the councillor conduct framework.
- any limitation on the right to privacy with respect to the proposed amendment to the councillor conduct register is justified, noting a councillor’s commitment to upholding the local government principles and standards of behaviour required of a councillor.

2.7. Disaster recovery funding arrangements (DRFA)

The Bill proposes to amend the COBA and the LGA to provide the Minister with the power to issue a general approval to local governments to make major policy decisions about DRFA assistance during local government election caretaker periods.¹⁷⁴ The proposal intends to streamline the current process whereby local governments must apply to the Minister for approval to make a major policy decision during caretaker where exceptional circumstances apply.¹⁷⁵

According to the department, difficulties were experienced by local governments in the aftermath of ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper, which coincided with the caretaker period ahead of the 2024 quadrennial local government elections. Specifically, recovery efforts were delayed because of the requirement for local governments to seek a Ministerial exemption before progressing contracts for disaster recovery works.¹⁷⁶

The explanatory notes state that this approach is considered more effective than relying on delegation of Ministerial power provisions as a means of expediting approval processes.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Statement of compatibility, p 4.

¹⁷³ Statement of compatibility, p 4.

¹⁷⁴ Bill, cls 6 and 52; explanatory notes, p 8.

¹⁷⁵ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 7.

¹⁷⁶ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 7.

¹⁷⁷ See COBA, s 236 and LGA, s 255.



2.7.1. Stakeholder Submissions

Stakeholders supported the proposal to provide the Minister the power to issue a general approval to local governments to make major policy decisions about DRFA assistance during caretaker periods.¹⁷⁸ The LGAQ submitted that the proposed amendment will greatly reduce administrative burden and ensure urgent works can be progressed without waiting for unnecessarily bureaucratic procedural approvals.¹⁷⁹



2.7.2. FLP Issue – Delegation of legislative power, Ministerial power to issue an approval

The Bill proposes to delegate legislative power to the Minister to grant a range of approvals, including to approve a local government to make major policy decisions about DRFA assistance during a caretaker period for the local government.

Whether a Bill has sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament depends on whether, for example, the Bill allows the delegation of legislative power only in appropriate cases and to appropriate persons.¹⁸⁰

The Bill would restrict the delegation of legislative power to the Minister by limiting the instances to where the local government is eligible for DRFA assistance, and the Minister considers it is necessary to achieve the objectives of the DRFA.

In addition, the Minister may place restrictions on the types of decisions that may be made by the local government and may condition the approval.

The delegation of power is intended to accommodate circumstances where the obligation on local governments to seek the Minister's approval before making such major policy decisions is not practical or represents a barrier to the timely progression of important disaster recovery works in the public interest.

Committee comment



The committee appreciates that during a natural disaster timely disaster management can significantly alter outcomes for communities. Under the current framework recovery efforts can be delayed, as observed in the aftermath of ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper.

Noting the limitations on the delegation, the committee is satisfied that the proposed delegation of legislative power to the Minister is appropriate and has sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament, such that it is consistent with fundamental legislative principles.

¹⁷⁸ Submissions 24, 34, 43.

¹⁷⁹ Submission 34, pp 10-11.

¹⁸⁰ LSA, s 4(4)(a).

2.8. Changes to mandatory training requirements

The Bill proposes to remove mandatory training requirements for incumbent and returning councillors by amending the LGEA, COBA and LGA.¹⁸¹

Training for election candidates

Under the LGEA, a person may only be nominated as a candidate for an election if the person has, 6 months prior to the nomination day, successfully completed a training course approved by the department's chief executive about:

- the person's obligations as a candidate, including the person's obligations under Part 6 of the LGEA (Electoral funding and financial disclosure), and
- the person's obligations as a councillor, if the person is elected or appointed, including obligations under a LGA within the meaning of the LGA.¹⁸²

The intention of the Bill is that sitting councillors who are nominating for re-election and who have completed the training previously, would not be required to complete the training again.¹⁸³

Training for councillors

Sections 169A of the COBA and LGA each require councillors to complete approved councillor training about the responsibilities of being a councillor within 6 months of the conclusion of the local government election. The approved training is prescribed by regulation and includes:

- the Code of Conduct
- registers of interests, and
- dealing with conflicts of interest.¹⁸⁴

The Bill proposes to amend the COBA and the LGA so that the requirement to complete mandatory approved training does not apply to returning councillors who have already completed the training. The Bill also proposes to prescribe by regulation, that all councillors, new and returning, will be required to successfully complete an approved training course on a topic within a specified period where there has been significant legislative or policy change.¹⁸⁵

2.8.1. Stakeholder Submissions and Department Advice

Stakeholders had mixed views about the Bill's proposal to remove mandatory training requirements for incumbent and returning councillors.

¹⁸¹ Bill, cls 134; 12 and 66.

¹⁸² Explanatory notes, p 10.

¹⁸³ Explanatory notes, p 10.

¹⁸⁴ Explanatory notes, p 10; DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 9.

¹⁸⁵ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 9.

Some submissions were supportive and identified benefits such as a reduction in unnecessary administrative burden and a positive acknowledgement of the experience and knowledge that sitting councillors have gained during their previous term/s.¹⁸⁶

However, some stakeholders raised concerns, including that removing mandatory training requirements:

- is inconsistent with public expectations for elected representatives and inconsistent with development and training requirements imposed on other professionals engaged in responsible decision making¹⁸⁷
- increases the risk of knowledge gaps and exposes risks in relation to poor decision making and noncompliance with legislative and policy frameworks.¹⁸⁸

The ECQ discussed the risk of knowledge gaps at a public hearing:

*There is a risk that should repeat or incumbent councillors not be required to do that training they will miss important data analysis and important new information that feeds into that training. ... There is a risk that incumbent councillors will be missing information that new candidates will be getting if they are not required to do that training.*¹⁸⁹

In response to these concerns, the department advised the Queensland Government's policy is that once a councillor has successfully completed mandatory training, they should not be required to do it again unless there is an order from the Councillor Conduct Tribunal.¹⁹⁰

The department noted that councillors attend voluntary training provided by the department or the LGAQ on how to perform their functions and responsibilities. The department added that the Bill's proposed changes do not prevent councillors from completing the training or seeking advice from the department or ECQ about their obligations. The department reiterated that all councillors, both new and returning, would be required to complete mandatory training within a certain time period during a local government term where legislative changes are implemented.¹⁹¹

Committee comment



The committee supports the proposed changes to mandatory training requirements for councillors. While some submitters have raised concerns that the changes risk creating knowledge gaps, the committee notes it is intended that all councillors will be required to complete mandatory training within a certain time period during a local government term where legislative change has been implemented.

¹⁸⁶ Submission 24, p 4; submission 48, p 3.

¹⁸⁷ Submission 26, p 4.

¹⁸⁸ Submission 26, p 4.

¹⁸⁹ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 16 January 2026, p 15.

¹⁹⁰ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 25.

¹⁹¹ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 25.

The committee encourages the department to work closely with the sector in the development of any new training materials, including reviewing material in accordance with sector feedback.

2.9. Streamlining process for postal ballot applications

The Bill proposes to streamline the process for postal ballot applications to allow local governments to make an application directly to the Electoral Commissioner for a poll to be conducted by postal ballot, instead of being required to first apply to the Minister.¹⁹²

The current process whereby the Electoral Commissioner considers the application and makes a recommendation to the Minister is proposed to remain in place. The Minister would consider the recommendation and decide whether to give a direction that the poll be conducted by postal ballot.¹⁹³

2.9.1. Stakeholder Submissions and Department Advice

Stakeholders supported the proposed changes to the postal ballot application process.¹⁹⁴

The ECQ gave in principle support for the intended purpose of the proposed changes to the postal ballot application process, noting the ECQ has previously requested such a change. However, the ECQ considers that the current drafting could be interpreted as allowing a substantive application for a recommendation be put to the ECQ (as opposed to the Minister).¹⁹⁵

The ECQ submitted the committee may consider recommending the proposed amendment be drafted in a way that clarifies the substantive application for a direction a ballot be conducted as a postal ballot is made to the Minister, though it may be delivered to the ECQ for its independent recommendation to the Minister, in a timely way.¹⁹⁶

In response to these concerns, the department advised that its initial view is that no amendments are required. The department acknowledged ECQ's concerns and stated that it will work with them to further understand this issue and identify any necessary amendments.¹⁹⁷

2.10. Review of divisions/wards and councillors before quadrennial elections

The Bill proposes to streamline the process for reviewing wards/divisions and councillors before local government quadrennial elections to provide that the ECQ, rather than local governments, is to initiate the divisional boundary review process head of an election.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹² Bill, cls 135-137; explanatory notes, p 11.

¹⁹³ Explanatory notes, p 11.

¹⁹⁴ Submission 7, p 4; submission 9, p 3; submission 24, p 2; submission 34, p 6; submission 35, p 3; submission 43, p 8.

¹⁹⁵ Submission 18, p 3.

¹⁹⁶ Submission 18, p 3.

¹⁹⁷ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 26.

¹⁹⁸ Bill cls 4 and 50; DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 10.

According to the department, the Bill recognises that the ECQ holds the relevant information and is better placed to initiate and undertake the review.¹⁹⁹

The Bill also proposes to align the deadline for the review of divisions and councillors in the LGA with the deadline in the COBA for the review of wards (i.e. 1 October in the year that is 2 years before the year of the election), to provide the Local Government Change Commission with more time to complete the necessary divisional boundary reviews.²⁰⁰

The department advised that this responds to ECQ advice that the time constraints imposed by the date under the LGA (i.e. 1 March in the year that is 1 year before the year of the election) make it difficult to complete the large volume of boundary reviews usually required in the year before local government quadrennial elections.²⁰¹

2.10.1. Stakeholder Submissions and Department Advice

Stakeholders supported the proposed changes to the process for reviewing wards/divisions and councillors before local government quadrennial elections.²⁰² The ECQ submitted that the proposed changes will streamline the commencement of enrolment reviews and reduce red tape for divided councils.²⁰³

The LGAQ submitted that any changes be supported by adequate consultation with councils.²⁰⁴ While supportive of the proposed changes, the Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council requested that divided councils, particularly Indigenous divided councils, be provided the opportunity to meet with and make representations to the ECQ regarding the number and size of divisions so that an Indigenous perspective is considered by the ECQ.²⁰⁵

2.11. Automatic vacation or removal from office

Automatic vacation of office if elected or appointed the mayor of the local government

The Bill proposes to provide for the automatic vacation of a councillor's office if, during a local government term, the councillor is elected or appointed to fill a vacancy in the office of the mayor. The COBA and the LGA currently provide for several circumstances in which a councillor's office becomes vacant, although they do not contemplate election or appointment as mayor.²⁰⁶

According to the department, when a sitting councillor is elected as mayor during the beginning or middle of a term at a by-election, or is appointed by resolution of the local government during the final part of a term, it is not intended that the councillor hold both

¹⁹⁹ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 10.

²⁰⁰ Explanatory notes, p 12.

²⁰¹ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 10.

²⁰² Submission 7, p 4; submission 34, p 22; submission 43, pp 8-9.

²⁰³ Submission 18, p 2.

²⁰⁴ Submission 34, pp 22-23.

²⁰⁵ Submission 43, pp 8-9.

²⁰⁶ Bill, cls 11 and 65; DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 12.

offices. The subsequent councillor vacancy should be filled as soon as possible in accordance with the existing processes under s 166 of the COBA and the LGA.²⁰⁷

Automatic removal from office upon nomination as a candidate for the Legislative Assembly

The Bill proposes to provide for the automatic removal of a councillor from office upon nomination as a candidate for election as a member of the Legislative Assembly.²⁰⁸ The COBA and the LGA currently provide that a councillor must take leave without pay for the duration of the period that the councillor is a candidate.

The explanatory notes state that this will ensure stability, minimise disruption and reduce operational impacts of councillors running for State office.²⁰⁹

2.11.1. Stakeholder Submissions and Department Advice

Automatic vacation of office if elected or appointed the mayor of the local government

Submitters supported the automatic vacation of office when a councillor is elected, or appointed, as mayor, noting that this closes a legislative gap and ensures vacancies are promptly filled.²¹⁰

The OIA highlighted a possible administrative discrepancy whereby the Bill would create a new circumstance in which a councillor's office becomes vacant, namely where the councillor is elected or appointed as mayor. Under the LGA, the OIA discontinues an investigation, or withdraws a Councillor Conduct Tribunal application, if the subject councillor's office becomes vacant.²¹¹

In light of the provisions in the Bill, the OIA submitted:

*... the proposed addition of section 162(1)(fa) may, on its face, result in a circumstance where a councillor who becomes mayor is technically taken to have vacated their office, thereby enlivening the Assessor's discontinuance and withdrawal obligations. This could lead to matters being discontinued or withdrawn only to be recommenced immediately once the person assumes mayoral office.*²¹²

The OIA requested clarification on the operation of this aspect of the Bill.²¹³ The department responded that it will further consider the issue in consultation with the OIA to resolve any unintended operational issues.²¹⁴

²⁰⁷ DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 12.

²⁰⁸ Bill, cls 8 and 62; DLGWV, written briefing, 5 December 2025, p 12.

²⁰⁹ Explanatory notes, p 15.

²¹⁰ Submission 9, p 4; submission 34, p 5; submission 43, p 16.

²¹¹ Submission 19, p 20.

²¹² Submission 19, p 20.

²¹³ Submission 19, p 20.

²¹⁴ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 28.

Automatic removal from office upon nomination as a candidate for the Legislative Assembly

Some submitters supported the proposal for the automatic removal of councillors who nominate as a candidate for election to the Legislative Assembly. Submitters identified the following benefits:

- the broader principle of requiring councillors to vacate their seat upon nomination supports transparency, accountability, and clarity for local communities.²¹⁵
- the proposed amendment reinforces the principle that councillors should remain fully committed to serving their communities during their terms, rather than dividing their focus to campaigning.²¹⁶

However, a number of submitters opposed the proposed amendment²¹⁷ and raised concerns, including that:

- while the intent is to maintain stability, this approach could create significant disruption for smaller councils and their communities²¹⁸
- the amendment would be a retrograde step and should not be supported in keeping with the words and sentiment of the *Equal Partners in Government Agreement*²¹⁹
- the change will create an inconsistency as elected council members can seek election to the Federal Parliament without being automatically removed from their council position.²²⁰

The LGAQ submitted that the proposal for the automatic removal of councillors who nominate as a candidate for election to the Legislative Assembly was the subject of a recent vote at a special general meeting of member councils. The LGAQ advised that a majority response was received from LGAQ Council members, the result of which is in opposition to the proposal in the Bill.²²¹

CTRC recommended an alternative model that allows councillors to take compulsory unpaid leave during the election period, with the vacancy only occurring if the councillor is successfully elected to the Legislative Assembly. CTCRC added that this would have the same effect as the Bill, without imposing an unnecessary financial burden of by-election on a council if the candidate is unsuccessful.²²²

²¹⁵ Submission 41, p 1.

²¹⁶ Submission 48, p 3.

²¹⁷ Submissions 4, 9, 27, 34, 36.

²¹⁸ Submission 9, p 4.

²¹⁹ Submission 34, p 37.

²²⁰ Submission 34, p 37.

²²¹ Submission 34, p 36.

²²² Submission 9, p 4.

At a public hearing, the committee queried the costs of by-elections with the ECQ, in particular the current scale of costs for a divisional council by-election and a mayoral by-election. The ECQ explained:

It really depends on the council itself and it depends whether it is a divided local government council. For example, we are shortly running an election in an Indigenous council in Far North Queensland with a few hundred members. It will be probably less than \$40,000 to run that election. A much bigger election could easily be, as you say, from \$700,000 upwards to \$800,000 or \$900,000 to run. It very much depends on the location of the council and whether it is divided or undivided as well. For example, in a by-election in an undivided council all electors have to vote again which increases the costs for the council compared to a divided council where it might just be one small division.²²³

In response to these concerns, the department advised that it is the Queensland Government's policy position that councillors automatically vacate office upon nomination to the Legislative Assembly to provide stability, minimise disruption and reduce operational impacts for councils.²²⁴

At a public briefing, the department elaborated on this:

When the community votes for local government elections, they are voting for their councillor or representatives for a period of four years. This is making it clear from the outset that your election to the role of councillor is really important to your community and that you are making that commitment for four years. There will always be circumstances where a councillor may have to resign before that four-year period ends. This is just making it clear that there is an expectation so that you are continuing to deliver for your community.²²⁵

Committee comment



The committee supports the proposal for the automatic removal of councillors who nominate as a candidate for election to the Legislative Assembly.

While some submitters have raised concerns, including the cost of by-elections to local governments, the committee considers that the changes proposed in the Bill offer communities certainty.

2.12. Disclosure of information relating to BCC's Establishment and Coordination Committee

The Bill proposes to amend the COBA to limit access to the BCC's Establishment and Coordination Committee (Civic Cabinet) information by non-member councillors until after

²²³ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 16 January 2026, p 13.

²²⁴ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 29.

²²⁵ DLGWV, public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 16 January 2026, p 6.

the making of a decision. The explanatory notes state the objective is to enable sound and robust decision making by the Civic Cabinet.²²⁶

Currently the COBA provides that a councillor may, subject to any limits prescribed by regulation, ask the CEO to provide information that the council has access to, relating to the council. If the request relates to a document, a copy of the document must also be provided.²²⁷

The COBA also provides that a councillor may view and make a copy of, or take an extract from, council records. Council records include documents created by or kept by BCC about its operations, whether or not the records must be available to be viewed by the public. The COBA prescribes some exemptions to councillor requests for information and councillor requests to inspect council records.²²⁸

The Bill proposes to amend the COBA to provide that a councillor who is not a member of Civic Cabinet may only request or inspect Civic Cabinet information once a decision on the matter relating to the information has been made.²²⁹

2.12.1. Stakeholder Submissions and Department Advice

The BCC supported the proposal however, its submission identified concerns with the proposed definition of 'committee information'. The BCC noted that the decisions of the committee are already publicly disclosed through Council's publication scheme; and that the definition of 'committee information' is too broad and inconsistent with the objective of the amendments. According to the BCC, there is no analogy for a disclosure regime in which draft submissions, briefing notes, and discussion notes which are prepared to assist in making a decision are subject to this kind of publication.²³⁰

The department advised that these issues are under consideration.²³¹

Some stakeholders did not support the proposal concerning changes to the disclosure of information relating to the BCC Establishment and Coordination Committee.²³² Councillor Jared Cassidy submitted that the amendments may allow critical documents and briefings to be withheld from opposing councillors which undermines the role of councillors as representatives and decision makers.²³³

At a public briefing, the committee sought clarification as to what safeguards will be in place to ensure that elected officials will not be limited from accessing information to make sure that it can be scrutinised in a timely manner.²³⁴

²²⁶ Explanatory notes, p 15; The Establishment and Coordination Committee is a standing, statutory committee of the BCC, which coordinates the business of the council. COBA, s 21.

²²⁷ Explanatory notes, p 15.

²²⁸ Explanatory notes, p 15.

²²⁹ Explanatory notes, p 15.

²³⁰ Submission 47, p 2.

²³¹ DLGWV, response to submissions, p 30.

²³² Submissions 20 and 21.

²³³ Submission 21, p 2.

²³⁴ DLGWV, public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 16 January 2026, p 4.

The department advised that currently the safeguard in the Bill is ‘that mechanism which says after a matter is finally resolved, the documents become available’. The department explained that the policy intent behind the Bill is to create a ‘deliberation space’ for Civic Cabinet, with disclosure afterward (similar to how state cabinet functions). The department added that the Bill contains a regulation-making power to determine the limitations on what ‘finally resolved’ means.²³⁵



2.12.2.FLP Issue – Delegation of power, regulation-making powers

The Bill proposes amendments that provide for certain matters to be addressed in subordinate legislation, including to provide that the Establishment and Coordination Committee (ECC) has ‘finally resolved’ a matter when the ECC has, by resolution, made a final decision about the matter, or has decided the matter in a way prescribed by regulation.²³⁶

According to the explanatory notes, the proposed amendments will ensure the appropriate release of Civic Cabinet information while promoting transparency and accountability.²³⁷

Committee comment



The committee is satisfied that the proposed delegation of legislative power is appropriate and has sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament, such that it is consistent with fundamental legislative principles.

²³⁵ DLGWV, public briefing transcript, Brisbane, 16 January 2026, p 4.

²³⁶ Bill, cls 22-23.

²³⁷ Explanatory notes, p 15.

Appendix A – Submitters

Sub No.	Name / Organisation
1	Sam Cullen
2	James Coghlan
3	Name Withheld
4	Name Withheld
5	Confidential
6	Chris Drake
7	Local Government Managers Australia
8	Shane Latcham
9	Charters Towers Regional Council
10	Name Withheld
11	Brian Pike
12	Maria Sealy
13	Lockyer Valley Regional Council
14	Raymond Seres
15	Flinders Shire Council
16	Isaac Regional Council
17	Amy Eden
18	Electoral Commission Queensland
19	Office of the Independent Assessor (OIA)
20	Nicole Johnston
21	Jared Cassidy
22	Paul Gregory Tully
23	Civil Contractors Federation Queensland
24	Cairns Regional Council
25	Cr Stephen Moriarty
26	Crime and Corruption Commission
27	Whitsunday Regional Council
28	Jos Mitchell

29	Natelle Archer
30	Balonne Shire Council
31	City of Gold Coast
32	Nick Adsett
33	Western Downs Regional Council
34	Local Government Association of Queensland
35	Office of the Mayor - City of Moreton Bay
36	Central Highlands Regional Council
37	Mareeba Shire Council
38	Southern Downs Regional Council
39	Mackay Regional Council
40	Patrick John Coleman
41	Fraser Coast Regional Council
42	Kieran Walsh
43	Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council
44	Maranoa Regional Council
45	The Services Union
46	Goondiwindi Regional Council
47	Brisbane City Council
48	Noosa Shire Council
49	Cr Rachael Cruwys
50	Jon Raven
51	Teresa Harding
52	Name Withheld
53	Name Withheld
54	Name Withheld
55	Confidential
56	Aaron Trickett
57	Name Withheld
58	Name Withheld

59	Joanne Barlow
60	Chris Stewart
61	Confidential
62	Katie Topping
63	Name Withheld
64	Kylie Rangi
65	Sean Johnson
66	Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council
67	Imelda Bordiss
68	Kath Down

Appendix B – Public Briefing, 10 December 2025

Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers

Ms Emily Carrigan	Acting Deputy Director-General, Local Government Division
Mr Karl Holden	Acting Director, Policy and Legislation Local Government Division
Ms Catherine Barthet	Manager, Legislation, Policy and Legislation, Local Government Division

Office of the Independent Assessor

Mr Charles Kohn

Acting Independent Assessor

Mr Nicholas Finn

Acting Deputy Independent Assessor

Mr Todd Saunders

Director, Media and Engagement

Appendix D – Public Briefing, 16 January 2026

Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers

Ms Emily Carrigan	Acting Deputy Director-General, Local Government Division
Mr Karl Holden	Acting Director, Policy and Legislation, Local Government Division
Ms Kristy Nau	Acting Executive Director, Strategy and Service Delivery, Local Government Division

Statement of Reservation

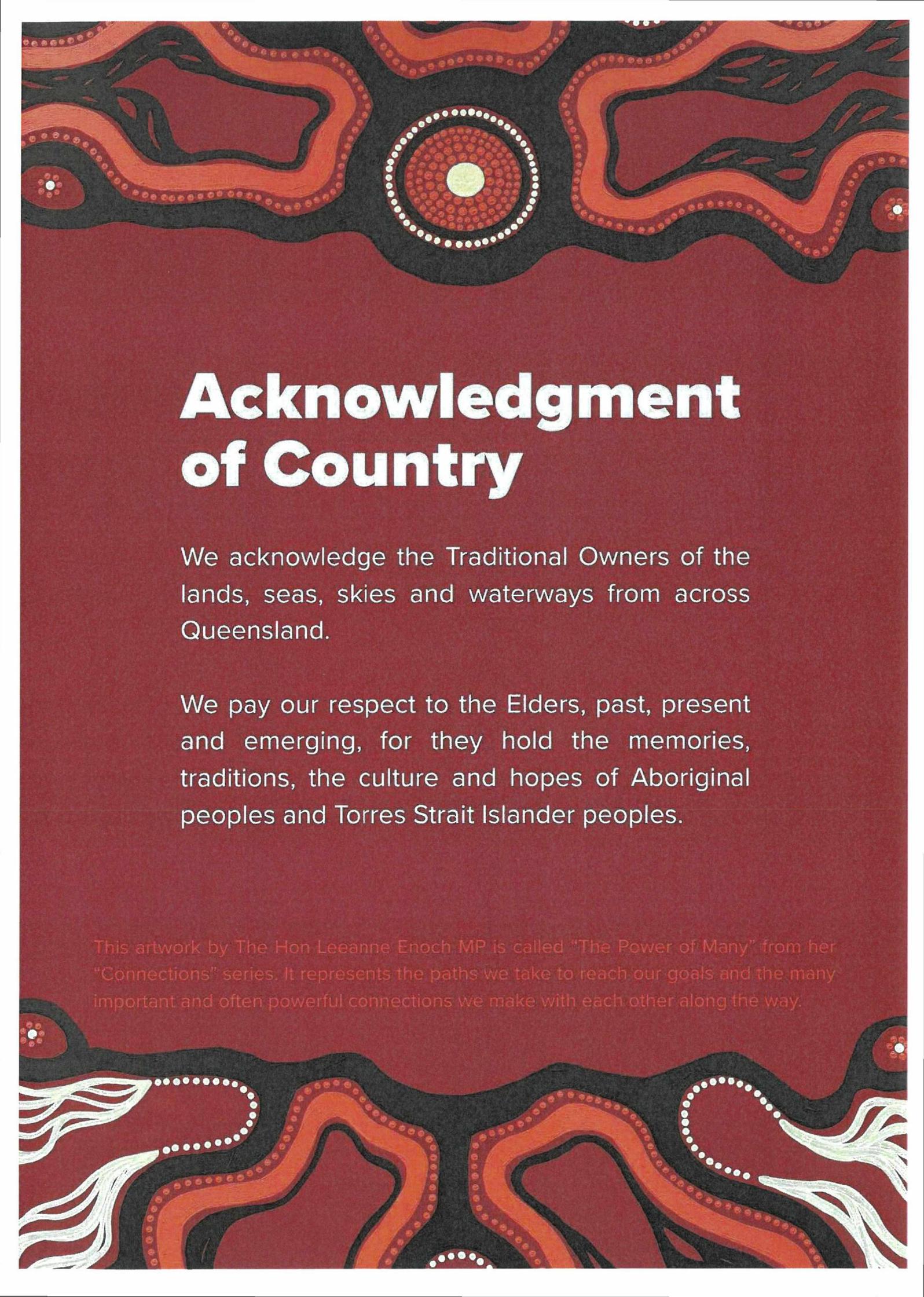


Statement of Reservation

Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee

Local Government (Empowering Councils)
and Other Legislation Amendment Bill
2025





Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands, seas, skies and waterways from across Queensland.

We pay our respect to the Elders, past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This artwork by The Hon. Leeanne Enoch MP is called "The Power of Many" from her "Connections" series. It represents the paths we take to reach our goals and the many important and often powerful connections we make with each other along the way.

Queensland Labor Opposition

The Queensland Labor Opposition respects the vital role that Queensland's 77 local governments play in delivering services and representing Queenslanders as the closest level of government to the community.

The Queensland Labor Opposition has always and will continue to support genuine efforts to achieve the most effective operating environment so that the 578 elected members and 45,000 person workforce can focus on serving their communities effectively, on behalf of all Queenslanders

While the *Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025* (the Bill) is framed as deregulatory, it goes well beyond streamlining. Instead appears to dismantle key integrity, transparency and accountability safeguards introduced following the Crime and Corruption Commission's Operation Belcarra report: A blueprint for integrity and addressing corruption risk in local government (Belcarra report).

This Bill proposes 318 amendments, omissions and/or insertions. Throughout the parliamentary committee process, it became clear that this Bill increases corruption risk, weakens conflict of interest management, limits councillor access to information, reduces disclosure standards and reintroduces the "resign-to-run" regime that Queensland local governments overwhelmingly oppose.

The Local Government's first portfolio value is to "*create an environment where the Local Government sector is empowered, including through fit for purpose legislation.*"¹ This legislation does nothing of the sort, so it begs the question; has the Minister even read the Bill and Local Governments' vocal opposition to it?

FLEXIBILITY OVER "ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL" GOVERNANCE

A recurring issue raised in relation to the Bill is its assumption that a uniform governance model is appropriate for all councils, despite their many differences in size, capacity, geography and resources. Many submitters and stakeholders believe that councils must retain discretion to adopt governance and operational models suited to their local context, specifically in senior executive recruitment, spokesperson arrangements and internal administrative practices.

The Local Government Managers Australia estimates that well over 50 per cent of councils involve elected members in appointing senior executives as a matter of course. However, there are many circumstances where this does not occur and where it is neither appropriate nor desirable including where:

- councillors wish to maintain independence from the appointment;
- the time burden of lengthy processes is prohibitive;
- conflicts of interest arise (particularly in small communities);
- councillors lack expertise or confidence in complex assessments; or
- existing tensions in council would be exacerbated by their involvement.

The strength of the current framework is its flexibility to meet the needs of councillors and the Chief Executive Officer or organisation. The proposal to mandate selection panel composition for senior executive appointments offers no improvement on current practice. It was clear from submitters and stakeholders alike that a degree of flexibility should be retained.

UNRAVELLING THE INTEGRITY FRAMEWORK

The Bill significantly increases reliance on self-assessment while reducing oversight, creating transparency gaps and elevating corruption risk.

¹ <https://cabinet.qld.gov.au/ministers-portfolios/assets/charter-letter/ann-leahv.pdf>

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It was clear from the committee process, via submitters and stakeholders that abolishing “conduct breaches” leaves serious behavioural issues and breaches of council policy without a clear enforcement pathway. This creates a dangerous gap between minor matters, and misconduct or corrupt conduct. Behaviour such as threatening or aggressive conduct, misuse of council resources, representing council while intoxicated, or breaches of gifts and benefits policies may no longer be adequately captured. These are not trivial matters, and they go to the heart of public trust and local government integrity.

The removal of “close personal relationships” from the conflict framework is problematic. Intimate or financially significant relationships may no longer be captured which increases the risk of improperly influenced decision-making. Significant donors are similarly not clearly captured as associates.

Shortening the Register of Interests disclosure window further weakens historical transparency and makes patterns of influence harder to detect.

The state’s corruption watchdog, the Crime and Corruption Commission Queensland² has explicitly warned that this Bill may:

“amplify corruption risks in the local government sector”

and noted that:

“Work undertaken by the CCC and other integrity agencies across Australia has repeatedly demonstrated that managing and declaring conflicts of interest is a high-risk area for local governments, particularly for elected officials,”

and further:

“The CCC considers that the Bill, if enacted, will wind back some of the significant integrity and transparency measures which were enshrined in local government laws in Queensland. The CCC considers this approach to be inconsistent with its Belcarra report recommendations and the public interest in ensuring good governance and mitigating corruption risks in local government.”

Providing councils with a clear, consistent framework rather than forcing them to rely on self-assessment, not only reduces corruption risk, but it also empowers councils by giving them certainty, authority and accountability. It also saves time and resources by preventing disputes over what constitutes a conflict and enabling matters to be resolved swiftly before they arise.

WINDING BACK BELCARRA: HOW THE BILL UNDERMINES CORRUPTION SAFETY NET

This Bill directly departs from key recommendations of the Crime and Corruption Commission. In doing so, it is winding back safeguards that were introduced to prevent and expose corruption risks in local government.

In particular, the Bill removes the requirement for non-conflicted councillors to determine whether a conflicted councillor may participate in a decision (Rec 24), despite the Crime and Corruption Commission recommending this as a critical transparency measure.

It also abolishes the duty of positive obligation on councillors to report suspected conflicts of interest in their colleagues (Rec 24), undermining the CCC’s model of peer accountability and early escalation.

² <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/LGECOLAB20-D4DC/submissions/00000026.pdf>

Further, the Bill replaces existing integrity offences rather than entrenching the Crime and Corruption Commission's recommendation that conflicted councillors be prohibited from influencing decisions once a matter is on the agenda (Rec 26).

Taken together, it was clear from the parliamentary committee process, submitters and stakeholders that these changes move Queensland local government governance away from the Crime and Corruption Commission's clear call for stronger, not weaker, integrity and transparency protections following the Queensland local government elections on 19 March 2016.

Submitter Sean Johnson FGIA LLB MBA of James Cook University³ coined these reforms "governing below the legal threshold" stating that repeal in the absence of replacement architecture results in a governance gap "below the legal threshold that remains consequential for decision legitimacy, public confidence and administrative risk." He states, "governing below the legal threshold is not regulatory excess".

The Queensland Labor Opposition encourage the Crisafulli LNP Government to closely monitor the removal of these provisions to ensure that the same integrity failures and corruption risks identified by the Crime and Corruption Commission in 2016 do not re-emerge under the Crisafulli LNP Government's proposed weakened framework.

REMOVAL OF INFLUENCE PROHIBITION IS A MAJOR INTEGRITY RISK

This Bill removes the prohibition on councillors with conflicts influencing decisions outside formal meetings. This enables lobbying of staff or fellow councillors behind closed doors, fundamentally undermining transparency and accountability.

This was noted by the Local Government Managers Australia during the public hearing who said:

"Stating that conflicts only apply and need to be managed in council meetings opens the door for councillors to inadvertently—or deliberately—influence council decisions without declaring appropriate conflicts. This was a loophole which was closed with prior amendments. From an LGMA perspective, we are concerned about the potential reputational damage to council, and it can put officers in a really difficult position where they are providing information or briefing up elected members who they know have a conflict".

As well as the Office of the Independent Assessor who said:

"we see an integrity risk in the removal of the current influence provision for conduct outside statutory meetings".

Council meetings are where decisions are finalised, but fairness depends on how decisions are formed. That is why conflicts of interest need to be managed early and at every stage of the decision-making process, not just when the vote happens.

Managing conflicts of interest transparently protects both council decisions and councillors personally. When conflicts are properly declared and managed councillors can point to a clear public record showing they acted in the public interest. This makes it easier to defend decisions if they are later questioned or criticised.

³ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/LGSBCSC-AACA/LGECOLAB20-D4DC/submissions/00000065.pdf>

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Transparency reduces suspicion and deters false accusations while giving councillors confidence to stand by their decisions knowing they followed the rules.

Transparency is not a burden but a safeguard for reputation and credibility, for the elected member, the entire council and the sector more broadly.

RETURN OF THE “RESIGN-TO-RUN” REGIME

This Bill removes a councillor’s existing right to return from compulsory leave and resume their role if unsuccessful in a State election, instead vacating the office entirely.

The existing laws were introduced in 2012 by then Minister for Local Government and now Premier, David Crisafulli LNP, under the Newman LNP Government.

At the time, then Minister for Local Government, now LNP Premier David Crisafulli said changing the law was a priority stating:

“It’s a matter of equity,”

“Good people from both sides of politics can enter local government and good people from both sides of politics may seek to make a contribution at another level”.

“It is a ridiculous situation that they are allowed to stand aside to contest a federal election but they are not allowed to stand aside to contest a state election. They have to resign.”⁴

The Crisafulli LNP Government now claims automatically removing a mayor or councillor from office if they run for state parliament is necessary *“in order to ensure council stability, minimise disruption and reduce operational impacts on the council and their community of councillors running for State office”⁵.*

Forcing councillors to resign to run for State Parliament does not reduce disruption, it creates it. It’s a move that reeks of petty politics of survival rather than a measure to empower councils or save taxpayers money.

The moment a councillor resigns the community loses its representative and council operations are affected straight away. If councillors are allowed to stay on compulsory leave while running, their position only becomes vacant if they actually win, which means disruption only happens when it is necessary.

Requiring councillor resignations increases the chance of by-elections because vacancies are created even when candidates lose. Perverse outcomes may even result where the resigning Councillor may lose the state election and then recontest the by-election for their recently vacated role, leaving the Council footing the bill for a very expensive election, only to achieve the same outcome.

The Local Government Association of Queensland have made the position of the local government sector clear in their submission stating:

“The majority of Queensland councils are opposed to this. That view was strongly born out in an LGAQ special general meeting by postal vote on 17 December 2025.

That meeting recorded a majority vote of members who backed the LGAQ policy position—one that is informed by and has been held by members since 2012—being that councillors should not have to resign to nominate and campaign for election to the Queensland parliament.

⁴ <https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/state-updates-council-rules/news-story/f4911241b5f0445a63c960fe11ed7b06>

⁵ <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-the-Assembly/Tabled-Papers/docs/5825t1845/5825t1845.pdf>

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In our 18 December supplementary submission, we recommended that this proposed reform be removed from the bill because most councils feel that it is a retrograde step, is not in keeping with the Equal Partners in Government agreement and could actually be costly for councils by creating more by-elections”.

Good public policy begins with identifying the nature, size and scope of the problem to be addressed. No such case has been made here.

The only logical conclusion is that this change is politically motivated and designed to deter strong local representatives from contesting State seats that may threaten Liberal National Party Members of Parliament.

RESTRICTING COUNCILLOR ACCESS TO INFORMATION AT BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL

This Bill amends the *City of Brisbane Act 2010* to restrict councillor access to Civic Cabinet documents.

Non-member councillors will only be able to inspect Civic Cabinet material after decisions are made, not before. This prevents ward councillors from scrutinising decisions affecting their communities until after consequences are already in motion.

This limits non-member councillors’ ability to test assumptions, challenge risks, or raise concerns proactively. Non-member councillors will be forced to explain decisions to their residents without ever having seen the material that shaped them.

Concentrating decision-shaping information within Civic Cabinet reduces transparency and undermines accountability across the broader elected body of Brisbane City Council.

This change is also of grave concern as the citizens of Brisbane have a right to know what their council is doing. To invoke this change, will limit transparency. Queenslanders only have to see what the current Crisafulli LNP Government is doing with the proactive release of Cabinet document scheme, to release that limited information is being released by that system, compared to the former Labor Government.

As the Liberal National Party also control Brisbane City Hall, there is a grave risk that this lack of transparency at a state level will creep in at the local government level.

TRAINING AND TRANSITION SUPPORT REQUIRED

For major framework changes, particularly around conflicts of interest and conduct the Local Government Association of Queensland has warned of high implementation risk, substantial training needs and the need to update standing orders and internal processes.

The Local Government Association of Queensland have stressed that reforms must not proceed without clear guidance, funded training and a post-implementation review.

The Queensland Labor Opposition echoes the sentiments of the stakeholders and encourages the Crisafulli LNP Government to ensure adequate appropriate training and support is provided to councils ahead of implementation.

RED TAPE REDUCTION TASKFORCE TRANSPARENCY FAILURE

The stated aim of this Bill is to reduce red tape, yet it was clear from the parliamentary committee process that submitters and stakeholders cannot determine whether or how it addresses the recommendations of the Crisafulli LNP Government’s Local Government Red Tape Reduction Taskforce (Taskforce).

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The Taskforce delivered its recommendations to the current Minister for Local Government and Water, Ann Leahy on 25 June 2025, but neither the report nor the Crisafulli LNP Government's response has been released, despite sitting on the Minister's desk for over seven months.

The Queensland Labor Opposition calls on the Crisafulli LNP Government to release this report to ensure transparency and allow Queenslanders to judge whether its recommendations genuinely underpin the red tape reduction measures in this Bill.

CONSULTATION FAILURES

The Queensland Labor Opposition is disappointed that consultation on this Bill occurred over the Christmas period and during disaster season, requiring local government staff and councillors to engage with the committee process while Crisafulli LNP Government Ministers holidayed overseas and indeed the very Minister responsible for the Bill and natural disaster Ann Leahy was on gazetted leave.

The committee did not travel at all through its deliberations, limiting the voices of local representatives around the state. It is deeply disappointing that only two hours and forty minutes was provided to hear from stakeholders and one and a half hours afforded to the department.

This is a critical bill and a little over two and a half hours with stakeholders was not sufficient to adequately examine the 318 amendments, omissions and/or insertions proposed and the 68 submissions received.

It is further concerning that the Crime and Corruption Commission did not appear before the parliamentary committee. The Crime and Corruption Commission provided robust frameworks to the sector a decade ago, which were legislated and operationalised. Regardless of opinion on the success or otherwise, it is alarming that the committee did not hear evidence from the Crime and Corruption Commission at the public hearing, despite them providing a written submission to the committee providing strong independent integrity concerns.

It became clear through the committees' examinations that the Crisafulli LNP Government began consultation on these reforms in May 2025, which begs the question why they were rushed through the December/January period when elected officials were on leave, and natural disasters were at their peak.

It is clear that the Crisafulli LNP Government introduced this bill, in addition to other reform pieces of legislation in the last sitting weeks of the 2025 parliamentary sitting and deliberately provided a timeframe for committee consideration, which is not consistent with an open and transparent government.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from submitters and stakeholders that this Bill presents itself as a red tape reduction exercise, but in practice it strips away vital governance protections without a compelling case, adequate consultation, or the support of the local government sector.

This Bill has the potential to weaken conflict of interest frameworks, reduces transparency, limits councillor oversight, undermines democratic participation and reverses long-standing policy without justification.

Queensland's councils deserve reform that empowers them, not reform that exposes them to greater risk, cost and uncertainty.

The Queensland Labor Opposition will continue to advocate for a balanced approach that reduces unnecessary regulation while strengthening integrity, accountability and public confidence in local government.

Queensland Labor Opposition

The bill deals with a number of issues, which the Queensland Labor Opposition reserves its right to articulate further views on those matters during the debate of the legislation.

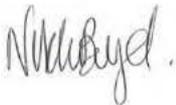
The Queensland Labor Opposition thanks the submitters who took the time to share their views on this important legislation and also thanks the Queensland Parliamentary Service staff for their assistance in scrutinising this legislation.



MARGIE NIGHTINGALE MP
MEMBER FOR INALA
DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE



JOAN PEASE MP
MEMBER FOR LYTTON
SHADOW MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS
SHADOW MINISTER FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE AND OPEN DATA



NIKKI BOYD MP
MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS
SHADOW MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND WATER
SHADOW MINISTER FOR FIRE, DISASTER RECOVERY,
EMERGENCY SERVICES AND VOLUNTEERS

On behalf of the Queensland Labor Opposition