

## **Councillor Responses - Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's Inquiry into Fraud and Corruption Control in Local Government**

Dear Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors,

Further to the hearings for the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's Inquiry into Fraud and Corruption Control in Local Government

The Committee also requests that the following two questions be reviewed and answered by all elected members of your Council:

- 1. How comfortable are you with the current use of confidentiality in meetings within your Councils?**
  - a. How could the need for confidentiality be better balanced with the requirement for Council decisions to be reported transparently?**
- 2. What have been the barriers and enablers to your council having a culture that makes councillors and council staff feel safe to 'speak up' when they identify fraud or corruption (both internally and formally through Public Interest Disclosures)?**
  - a. Do you feel confident that integrity agencies are willing and able to investigate suspected fraud and corruption incidents in an appropriate and timely manner?**

### **Cr Paddy Keys-Macpherson - Response**

1. I am quite comfortable with the current use of confidentiality in our Council meetings. It has mostly related to CEO employment matters, or commercial-in-confidence figures or details on contract awards. We have sought to release some of the confidential decisions later where appropriate.
  - a. I think restricting confidentiality to items like those (sensitive CEO Employment matters and commercial-in-confidence items) and having clear processes for the release of confidential information at later dates when it can be are good measures.
2. People feeling like there will be retribution or like the channels to report won't keep their identities confidential where requested makes people feel unsafe.
  - a. No

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### **Cr Rayane Hawli - Response**

1. I am comfortable with the current use of confidentiality in meetings. Internal forums are not designed for decision-making but rather provide an opportunity for councillors to seek clarification and develop a deeper understanding of the matters before them. They also provide a space for Council staff to share their expertise, present options, and test ideas before they are brought into the public arena. It is important to recognise that reaching the point of disclosure to the public takes time, and in some cases requires more than one meeting to gather the necessary information before a decision can be made. Councillors should be held accountable for the decisions made in the public forum of a Council meeting, which is the appropriate setting for disclosure to the community. It is at this point that councillors set out the reasoning behind their decisions, ensuring transparency in both process and outcome. Confidentiality, when applied appropriately, supports good governance by allowing councillors to work through complex issues in depth, while the final decisions remain transparent and accountable to the public. This approach reassures the community that councillors are making well-considered decisions based on complete information. Reducing confidentiality in internal forums would, in my view, risk discouraging councillors from asking questions openly, which could in turn undermine both the quality of decision-making and the ability of councillors to fully carry out their roles.
2. At my council, factors that enable a culture of speaking up include strong leadership from senior staff and councillors who actively support raising concerns, as well as accessible channels such as confidential reporting processes. Staff training and awareness initiatives further reinforce understanding of the rights and protections available when reporting suspected fraud or corruption. Barriers I have observed include hesitation among councillors or staff to raise concerns due to potential reputational impacts, interpersonal conflict, or fear of losing employment, as well as perceptions that reporting processes can be slow or complex. These factors discourage individuals from coming forward. I am confident that integrity agencies are willing to investigate suspected fraud and corruption. While they are capable of handling matters appropriately, investigations can sometimes take longer than expected, which affect perceptions of timeliness.