



Media Release

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BCC INCREASES SECRECY IN COUNCIL DECISION MAKING

Lord Mayor Graham Quirk and LNP Councillors will today introduce new rules tightening secrecy provisions regarding Brisbane City Council meetings and access to information.

The changes are contained in amendments to the Meetings Local Laws and Corporate Governance Package will be considered by Council today under the cloak of the Federal election campaign.

Councillor Johnston said the changes would reduce access to information, restrict debate and scrutiny of Council decisions and give more power to the Chairman of Council.

“The changes introduced by the LNP today strike at the heart of transparency and accountability. Councillors’ rights to engage in robust debate of matters of importance will be curtailed and the secrecy surrounding Council decisions will be significantly increased,” Councillor Johnston said.

The amendments include:

- removing s19(1) which allowed Councillors to seek information about a Council matters at the meeting prior to debate;
- introducing a new restrictions on debate in s37(1) preventing discussion of any “confidential material” or any “investigation”;
- removing the ability of independent Councillors to ask questions at question time in s33;
- a new power allowing the Chairman to alter the Council agenda at will in s12;
- increasing the Chairman’s powers to eject Councillors by creating four new ‘acts of disorder’ in s21; and
- deliberate political interference in CCRP matters in s47.

The Queensland Ombudsman has repeatedly criticised Council’s handling of chamber matters describing some decision of the Chairman of Council as “capricious” and “arbitrary”. Last year, the Ombudsman recommended that “Council consider...options and makes recommendations to improve the approach for dealing with Councillor conduct complaints arising from in-chamber complaints.”

Instead of acting on the Queensland Ombudsman’s recommendations, the LNP has further increased the powers of the Chairman of Council and failed to implement any review mechanism of her actions.

The independent review of the actions of Crs De Wit, Adams and Owen-Taylor via the CCRP process has found multiple breaches of the Council rules of procedure.

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