



LGAQ Communique

Local Government Association of Queensland
response to Crime and Corruption Commission
Report “*Culture and corruption risks in local
government: Lessons from an investigation into
Ipswich City Council (Operation Windage)*”

About the LGAQ

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) is the peak body for local government in Queensland. We are a not-for-profit association setup solely to serve the state's 77 councils and their individual needs.

We have been advising, supporting and representing local councils since 1896, aiding them to improve their operations and strengthen relationships with their communities.

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Openness, accountability and transparency are at the heart of representative democracy. Local governments in Queensland must always act to embody these fundamental community expectations and values.

The Local Government Association of Queensland is committed to having its members exceed these expectations.

In this spirit, it has both embraced the proposed integrity and governance reforms where they make sense and asked the State Government to go beyond those proposed by the Crime and Corruption Commission in its Belcarra Report.

The recent release of the CCC's report into the behaviours and corruption risks it observed during its Operation Windage investigation of Ipswich City Council cannot be overlooked. The LGAQ takes seriously the allegations contained within the report and is committed to ensuring these circumstances are never repeated.

The LGAQ agrees that policy and procedural changes need to take place in the wake of the report's findings.

This is not the standard communities expect of local governments, but the report should not be read as an indication of the standard of behaviour across local government in Queensland.

Communities trust local councils to do the right thing and in their local communities' interest. This is the standard by which councils must measure themselves and one we expect them to meet in every case, every day.

The LGAQ's 16-member Policy Executive therefore has seriously considered the four recommendations in the CCC's Report of Operation Windage and provides the following response.

In relation to Recommendation 1: Awareness of governance and financial literacy

The LGAQ has always sought to ensure that elected members are aware of their obligations regarding governance and financial literacy. In conjunction with the Queensland Treasury Corporation, the LGAQ provides the opportunity for all councillors to attend annual Elected Member Updates which highlight the responsibilities elected members have in regard to governance and financial literacy.

Any support available to further enhance these resources and training programs is welcomed. The LGAQ also believes that it should be mandatory that all candidates at local government elections be obliged to undertake appropriate training prior to nomination.

In relation to Recommendation 2: Enhanced Compliance with Policies and Procedures in High Risk Areas

The LGAQ welcomes any recommendation that supports the adherence to policies and procedures and monitoring compliance.

The LGAQ has invested heavily in legal and industrial relations advice services, and educational information circulars to ensure effective policy and procedural standards for governance and compliance are in place, including in areas of high risk such as fraud.

Councils are already subjected to regular monitoring by State and Federal Compliance Agencies such as Queensland Treasury Corporation, the Queensland Audit Office and the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs.

For example, the Queensland Auditor-General makes regular recommendations to councils on how to improve their financial management.

In relation to Recommendation 3: Local Government controlled Enterprises

The LGAQ firmly believes that the proper use by councils of controlled entities to conduct certain businesses and activities is in the public interest. In the main, these entities are at arm's length from elected members, and LGAQ supports a prohibition on elected members serving on such entities into the future. Financial statements are prepared by each entity, most of which are subject to audit by the QAO.

The findings against Ipswich City Council should not be used to force unwieldy and unnecessary restrictions on the entire local government sector.

Further, the LGAQ notes that accepting the CCC's recommendation to subject controlled entities to the Right to Information Act would create a standard of disclosure inconsistent to that imposed on State's Government Owned Corporations.

We believe the standards of behaviour, transparency and accountability expected of local government should be the same as those expected of the State Government.

In relation to Recommendation 4: Private Email Accounts

The LGAQ supports in principle a prohibition on the use of private email accounts to conduct council business. However, we caution against using local laws to give effect to this prohibition.

LGAQ Policy Executive, Palm Island, 23 August 2018