

*Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission — Twenty-fourth Report — “The intention of the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission to retire” — Motion*

Resumed from 16 May on the following motion moved by Hon Nick Goiran —

That the report be noted.

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** As a member of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission I have much pleasure in supporting Hon Nick Goiran’s motion to note the twenty-fourth report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission concerning the intention of the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission to retire. I concur completely with Hon Nick Goiran’s remarks about Hon Chris Steytler, QC, a former Justice of the Western Australian Supreme Court and President of the Court of Appeals, and a man of extraordinary talent whose commitment to the office of parliamentary inspector has seen him make an enormous contribution. Given that Hon Chris Steytler assumed the office of Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission on 1 February 2009, I have no firsthand experience of any other parliamentary inspector; however, as the Chairman of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission has indicated, Hon Chris Steytler took on the role in very difficult times and has certainly made it his own and he will leave a significant void.

**Hon Ken Travers:** We have been blessed by excellent parliamentary inspectors, both Hon Chris Steytler and the previous one.

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** Hon Ken Travers is quite right and I agree with him, but I had no firsthand experience prior to Hon Chris Steytler. A highlight of Hon Chris Steytler’s time as parliamentary inspector has been his work with and advice to the joint standing committee in promoting the need for the CCC to be increasingly more focused and vigilant in the oversight of police conduct and integrity.

The parliamentary inspector has a reporting requirement to deliver an annual report to Parliament about the year’s activities, and on an ongoing basis the inspector reports to Parliament or to the joint standing committee at any time on issues impacting on the commission. Reporting matters include such things as operational effectiveness, commission requirements and any administrative or general policy issues relating to the various functions of the parliamentary inspector’s office. The parliamentary inspector’s reports are always thorough, informative and balanced, affording the joint standing committee the capacity to make objective and appropriate decisions.

Before concluding, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of my committee colleagues, in particular, the excellent chairmanship of Hon Nick Goiran. I also acknowledge the deputy chair, the member for Perth, Mr John Hyde, and the member for Swan Hills, Mr Frank Alban. I make special mention of the principal research officer, Mr John King, and the research officer, Mr Michael Burton; their professionalism and commitment are always first-class. Finally, I join with Hon Nick Goiran in expressing the joint standing committee’s appreciation of Christopher David Steytler’s outstanding contribution to the office of parliamentary inspector and wish him well in his future endeavours.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I want to join with my colleagues in expressing what I think should be the Parliament’s gratitude to the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission. I was the chair when he was originally appointed, and we were very fortunate to have a jurist of his calibre come in and take over. He took over the role of parliamentary inspector from the previous one, who is now our Governor, and he also served the people of Western Australia with distinction in that role. It is worth noting that both of them did an excellent job but with very different personal styles in the way in which they conducted themselves, but they both did it very effectively and as a result of that we ended up with a better system within the CCC. I think both of them demonstrated to us how the system is intended to work and that there needs to be an element of conflict. Sometimes we have seen that conflict as criticism of the individuals operating within the CCC. I never saw it in that way; I saw it about using the friction, where strong powers have those competing interests, so that those separate views are able to be brought forward to provide that sense of balance. I think they both have done it very well.

When I consider the first two parliamentary inspectors in Western Australia, it is going to be an extraordinary challenge to find a third parliamentary inspector of the same calibre and quality as the first two. But I think it is absolutely crucial. It is fantastic that we have people in Western Australia who will put themselves forward into those positions, because they are not easy positions. Both the commissioner of the CCC and the parliamentary inspector are subjected to a fair degree of public scrutiny. It is not an easy job and it takes a lot of courage sometimes and a lot of effort to do the job. It is not a job that any of them do for financial reward or anything else. My experience of them is that it is about providing a service to the community. They have already served in other roles and they see that as part of the continuation of their service to the state with only noble motivations as the justification for taking on the role. It is important that this Parliament takes this opportunity to acknowledge

the roles they have played. When a new parliamentary inspector is appointed I will wish them the very best. I believe it is a very important part of the parliamentary process. We have given some exceptional powers to the Corruption and Crime Commission and we need to have those counterbalances. The other point we need to keep in mind is that, just because there is friction between the commissioner and the parliamentary inspector of itself does not mean the system is broken or not working; in my view, it means the system is working well and there are those checks and balances occurring to make sure it is appropriate. It is probably appropriate to acknowledge that over the years the commissioners have done a great job. Over the time I was the chair of the committee some of the people who were criticised were being criticised for actions that they themselves had not taken but for which they had instigated new and ongoing reforms to the processes. Again, they carried the role of defending the organisation and at times they carried a heavy burden.

Of course, the final element in the system and the structure as we have it is the parliamentary oversight committee, and I want to also place on the record that, as a former chair, I follow and note the reports. It will be tough, but I can probably just about bring myself to congratulate all the members of the committee and the chair! I think we have been blessed with chairs of that committee who have held that role with distinction, and I think the current chair has continued to do that. In all seriousness, the chair plays a very important part. When those challenges are raised by the parliamentary inspector, and those frictions are there, the chairs also have a role to play in trying to resolve those frictions, helping to move things forward and being, in a sense, the representatives of this Parliament in that process to ensure we are getting the best possible outcomes for the people of Western Australia. Therefore, in all seriousness, I want to place on the record that I think we should also congratulate that committee—the members of that committee from this place, the chairman from this place and the members in the other place—for the role they are fulfilling on that committee. It is not an easy committee. I understand members have to travel relentlessly, at great sacrifice to themselves, from time to time!

**Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm:** We are following the tradition, aren't we?

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** It may have been so under certain chairs, but certainly not whilst I was the chair. We were more kept at home in dealing with matters and issues of immediacy within Western Australia when I was the chair. I am trying to remember; I think we may have done one trip, but I understand the relentless and tiring nature of the job that the current committee has to undertake. With those comments, I want to place on record that I think it is appropriate that we all acknowledge those who have fulfilled those roles and thank them for their contributions, particularly Christopher Steytler, who I think will formally retire from —

**Hon Nick Goiran:** On 30 June.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** On 30 June he will retire from that position. We should thank him for his contribution and his efforts, which have really been appreciated. I think, through his contribution, he has made the Corruption and Crime Commission a better organisation in the way it now it operates. I think that is all we can ever ask of anyone in a role such as that; that is, if they can leave an organisation better than it was when they arrived, they have done their job. That is not to be seen as a criticism of those who came before him, who also left the organisation in a better way than they found it, and they fulfilled their roles with distinction.

**Question put and passed.**