

COUNCILLOR EOIN MARTIN

Statement by Minister for Local Government

MR OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood - Minister for Local Government) [12.05 pm]: In January 2000 the Executive Director of the Department of Local Government established an inquiry under section 8.3(1) of the Local Government Act 1995 into the conduct of Councillor Eoin Martin of the City of Stirling. The inquiry concerned matters associated with lots 36 and 67 Gribble Road, Gwelup, lot 78 Boulton Street, Dianella, lot 2 Banksia Street, Joondanna and lot 62 Wanborough Close, Gwelup.

The inquiry report makes five findings against Cr Martin in relation to his use of his office of councillor to gain a personal benefit and mislead owners of other properties. In several cases the inquiry report finds that Cr Martin acted improperly by using his office of councillor to gain an advantage to himself by representing information he knew was not true.

The inquiry report also indicates that potential breaches of other legislation may have occurred. The potential breaches relate to the issue of whether Cr Martin's conduct in relation to matters affecting lot 67 Gribble Road, Gwelup constituted a criminal offence or offences and whether the chief executive officer of the City of Stirling Council failed to report matters concerning alleged corrupt, criminal or serious improper conduct by Cr Martin to the proper authority. The findings against Cr Martin and other matters have been referred to the appropriate agency to determine what action should be taken. In accordance with section 8.14 of the Local Government Act 1995, the Executive Director of the Department of Local Government has today written to the Council of the City of Stirling requiring it to advise me of the courses of action it proposes to take to give effect to the recommendations made in the inquiry report.

The inquiry has made 14 recommendations, the majority of which address procedural matters relating to the City of Stirling. These recommendations focus upon potential deficiencies in the application of city policies by staff, the city's code of conduct, the city's handling of complaints and inappropriate access to information by elected members who may have an interest in a matter. The findings and recommendations of the inquiry report also lead me to the view that elected members of the city council still do not understand their roles and responsibilities.

On a number of occasions I have emphasised the importance of training and professional development for elected members, and great credit is due to those councils and councillors that have participated in structured training. However, it is also clear that many councillors, often long serving, have not done so. I have asked the Department of Local Government to analyse training participation levels and to report to me in due course.

The City of Stirling has long enjoyed a well-deserved reputation for sound financial management, good administration and quality representation. It would do well to respond promptly to this inquiry report to maintain that reputation.

In accordance with advice from the Crown Solicitor, I table the "Report of the Inquiry into the conduct of Councillor Eoin Martin of the City of Stirling", and I move -

That the Assembly authorises publication of the report.

Question put and passed.

[See paper No 251.]