

QCCL MEDIA RELEASE

CALL FOR JUDICIAL INQUIRY INTO POLICE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The Queensland Council for Civil Liberties today called for the Bligh government to appoint a Judicial Inquiry into the police complaints process in Queensland.

QCCL Vice-President Terry O’Gorman said that 20 years after the 1989 Fitzgerald Report abandoned the discredited model of police investigating police, the same discredited model is now back.

“Despite the existence of the CMC we are back to the bad old pre Fitzgerald days where police investigate police and run dead on too many complaints against police” Mr O’Gorman said.

Mr O’Gorman said that the current government has to take a large degree of responsibility for this state of affairs as it undid the Fitzgerald model in 2001 when the then Premier Beattie handed all investigations of complaints against police back to the police themselves.

Mr O’Gorman said that under the new Beattie model the CMC was to have a monitoring role in the post 2001 regime where police were to investigate police but the CMC’s role has been hit and miss, more miss than hit as today’s Report shows.

Mr O’Gorman said that the Queensland Parliamentary Committee which was supposed to oversight the CMC itself in respect of the Palm Island affair shows the Committee had failed in its role of calling the CMC to account.

“Whether this was because the Parliamentary Committee has a majority of government members or has a constantly changing membership or whether the Committee has been captured by the CMC, the very body it is supposed to supervise and call to account, is what the proposed Judicial Inquiry should examine” Mr O’Gorman said.

Mr O’Gorman said that while the new CMC Chair’s (Mr Moynihan AO QC) strong stance on the Palm Island fiasco as outlined in today’s Report was welcome, the fact remained that the CMC had failed miserably over the last five and a half years to do its job in respect of the Palm Island controversy.

“Why this has happened and what changes are needed to the CMC oversight role over the Queensland Police Service is what the Judicial Inquiry should look into” Mr O’Gorman said.

Mr O’Gorman said that the CMC after 20 years has seriously strayed from its core Fitzgerald recommended model.

“The CMC has become enamoured of its crime fighting/super police force role and has seriously neglected over the last ten years its police oversight role” Mr O’Gorman

said.

Mr O’Gorman said that the Civil Liberties Council would be arguing to the proposed Judicial Inquiry that the CMC be split into two separate bodies such as exists in New South Wales, namely a Crime Commission like the NSWCC which would carry on the CMC super police force/organized crime role, and a separate Police Integrity Commission (PIC) which would be staffed by non police investigators and be properly funded to perform a credible and proper oversight role of the Queensland Police Service complaints process.

Brisbane, 17 June 2010
Queensland Council for Civil Liberties