



THE HON STEVEN MILES MP
Leader of the Opposition

Queensland Legislative Assembly	
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MP: <u>HON MILES</u>	By Leave <input type="checkbox"/>
Clerk's Signature: <u>[Signature]</u>	

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31 March 2025

The Honourable Deborah Frecklington MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
Minister for Integrity
1 William Street
BRISBANE QLD 4001

VIA EMAIL: attorney.general@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Attorney

I refer to your correspondence dated 24 March 2025 regarding appointments to the Queensland Redistribution Commission.

Section 6(7)(a) of the *Electoral Act 1992* states “A person may be appointed as the chairperson or nonjudicial appointee only if the Minister has consulted – with each member of the Legislative Assembly recognised as the leader of a political party represented in the Assembly about the proposed appointment”. As such, I thank you for the opportunity to be consulted on the proposed nominees for the Queensland Redistribution Commission pursuant to section 6(7) of the *Electoral Act 1992*.

It is noted that upon your consultation with The Honourable Chief Justice Helen Bowskill and His Honour Chief Judge Brian Devereaux SC that you are wanting to appoint Mr Gregory Koppenol as the Chairperson of the Queensland Redistribution Commission.

It is further noted that you believe that the appointment satisfies 6(5) of the *Electoral Act 1992*, which states that “the person appointed as chairperson must be a judge or former judge of a court of the Commonwealth or a State or Territory and have been a judge for at least 3 years.”. The Queensland Opposition does not hold a view to the contrary in relation to the proposed appointment of the retired District Court Judge.

In respect of the nonjudicial appointment, pursuant to section 6(6) of the *Electoral Act 1992*, it is understood that you propose to appoint a Mr John Sosso, who was directly appointed without a merit-based recruitment process to the role of Director-General of the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. It is also understood that Mr Sosso was previously a member of the Liberal Party and was active in the party.

The *Electoral Act 1992* is silent on the total criteria which should be used to appoint a nonjudicial appointee. Pursuant to section 6(6) of the *Electoral Act 1992* the only requirement in statute is that the nominee must either be “the chief executive of a department” or “the holder of an office established by or under an Act that the Governor in Council considers to be equivalent to the chief executive of a department”. That definition outlined in the legislation therefore provides for a large array of individuals for consideration to this important role.

As you would appreciate, the review of electoral boundaries and having a proper process to do so, was a core element of the Fitzgerald Inquiry. As such, it is important that the work undertaken by the Queensland Redistribution Commission is beyond reproach. Its work must be able to be respected, impartial and valued by all sections of the community.

In a submission to a parliamentary inquiry into Newman Government laws in respect of changes to the then Crime and Misconduct Commission, Tony Fitzgerald stated that in respect of the inquiry established in 1987, the then "*Attorney-General appointed one, John Sosso, as Secretary to the Inquiry. Sosso didn't last long in that role but returned to the Justice Department which, as the Inquiry's report notes, did little willingly to assist the Inquiry*". [Emphasis Added]

It is therefore disappointing to read that the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity wishes to appoint an individual, who in the words of the inquiry chairperson, did not "*willingly*" assist it, to an independent body which was created from findings and recommendations of the Fitzgerald Inquiry.

Given Mr Sosso's admissions regarding his previous political activities and Mr Sosso's involvement in respect of key integrity matters from the Newman LNP Government between 2012 and 2015, including the Queensland Audit Report into the failed bootcamp scheme, coupled with the comments from Mr Fitzgerald, the Queensland Opposition contends that he is not suitable to carry out the non-partisan role of Commissioner on the Queensland Redistribution Commission and cannot support his appointment.

Therefore, the Queensland Opposition respectfully asks that the nominee for the nonjudicial member of the Queensland Redistribution Commission be reconsidered. What processes and considerations went into the potential nominee for the appointment of the nonjudicial member of the Queensland Redistribution Commission? Were other nominees canvassed? And if so, why were they dismissed as not being suitable?

While the Queensland Opposition supports the highly respected Electoral Commissioner, Mr Pat Vidgen PSM and notes the appointment of the retired District Court Judge after consultation with heads of jurisdiction, the Queensland Opposition, on the information provided in your correspondence, is unable to support the LNP Government's nominee for the nonjudicial appointee to the Queensland Redistribution Commission for the reasons outlined.

The Honourable Meaghan Scanlon MP – Shadow Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for Justice and I are amenable to meet with you at your convenience to discuss this matter further, to ensure that Queenslanders have confidence in the redistribution process of their electoral boundaries.

Yours sincerely



STEVEN MILES MP
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

cc *The Honourable Meaghan Scanlon MP*
Shadow Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for Justice