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UPDATED

Qld politics: Labor pushes back at John Sosso move to QRC

A question to the corruption watchdog's boss over a new appointment for Jarrod Bleijie's director-general has been shut down by the state government.

Taylah Fellows and Hayden Johnson

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Then attorney-general Jarrod Bleijie (right) with John Sosso in 2015

The state government has shut down a question to the corruption watchdog's boss over the proposed appointment of Deputy Premier Jarrod Bleijie's director-general to the Queensland Redistribution Commission.

Overnight, The Courier-Mail revealed the government wanted to appoint State Development, Infrastructure and Planning director-general John Sosso a non-judicial member of the body that determines the state's new electoral boundaries.

The revelation was contained in a letter Attorney-General Deb Frecklington written to Opposition Leader Steven Miles outlining her proposed appointment to the Queensland Redistribution Commission.

It also revealed Queensland Electoral Commissioner Pat Vidgen and esteem barrister Gregory Koppenol would be appointed as chairmen.

Without naming Mr Sosso, shadow attorney-general Meaghan Scanlon on Wednesday used a parliamentary committee to ask Crime and Corruption Commission chair Bruce Barbour whether such an appointment would be appropriate.

“I just wanted to ask the CCC whether you believe that individuals appointed to the Queensland Redistribution Commission should be truly independent beyond reproach and have no political affiliations?” she asked.

Committee chair Marty Hunt said the question did not relate to the committee discussions.

“That’s outside the scope... I rule that out of order,” he said.



Shadow attorney-general Meaghan Scanlon

Mr Sosso has a long history working for LNP governments.

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He was employed in the Department of Justice's policy and legislative division in 1984.

He then became Department of Premier and Cabinet deputy director-general under premier Rob Borbidge, and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General director-general under premier Campbell Newman.

Mr Miles told The Courier-Mail on Tuesday night it was critical QRC appointees were perceived as impartial.

“Anyone with any understanding of Queensland political history would know how critical it is that we have fair electoral boundaries determined by people who are not just impartial, but are perceived as impartial,” Mr Miles said.

The former gerrymander of electoral boundaries saw the Nationals government of premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen returned for decades.

An independent statutory body, the QRC was founded alongside the now Crime and Corruption Commission as a result of the landmark Fitzgerald inquiry.

Fitzgerald inquiry commissioner Tony Fitzgerald – in a scathing submission to the 2014 Crime and Misconduct Amendment Bill that set out to reduce the CCC's focus on public sector corruption under Mr Newman – criticised Mr Sosso's resistance to co-operate with the inquiry and his susceptibility to influence.



John Sosso when director-general of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in 2014

“When the inquiry was established in 1987, the National Party attorney-general (Mr Sosso) was advised and influenced by a small ambitious group of Justice Department bureaucrats,” he said.

No findings were made against Mr Sosso.

In Ms Frecklington’s letter, seen by The Courier-Mail, she requested Mr Miles’s feedback on the proposed appointees.

“It is intended to have the QRC constituted as soon as practicable to avoid delays with the electoral distribution,” she said.

She argued Mr Sosso was fit for the role due to his legal experience and employment in several government departments, including as deputy president of the National Native Title Tribunal from 2000-12 under Labor.

She said his appointment met the requirements of the Electoral Act 1992 if consulted with party leaders and the relevant parliamentary committee.

Mr Sosso holds a Bachelor of Law and Public Administration from the University of Queensland and was a private solicitor before entering the public service sector. He was president of the Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal prior to being appointed as the Director-General State Development in 2024.

Asked to confirm Mr Sosso’s selection, a spokeswoman for Ms Frecklington’s office said all appointments to the QRC were still being considered.

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Then attorney-general Jarrod Bleijie (right) with John Sosso in 2015

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