



**Statement by the Queensland Integrity Commissioner, Dr Nikola Stepanov PhD.  
Wednesday, 26 January 2022.**

**My resignation**

It has been an absolute privilege, and the highlight of my career thus far, to serve as the fifth Integrity Commissioner for the State of Queensland.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to work with advisees in the pursuit of good governance, and the opportunity to work with the lobbying industry and other key stakeholders in the integrity sphere.

However, in my view the completion of the Strategic Review of the Queensland Integrity Commissioner (the Review) in September 2021 signalled the start of what ought to be a new chapter for the office of Integrity Commissioner.

As well, my decision to resign was informed by my strong desire to further expand upon my expertise in the areas of public law and governance.

To ensure a smooth and orderly transition, I informed the Director-General (DG) of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) of my intention to consider offers, and upon accepting a formal offer in late November 2021, I informed the DG.

As required under section 80 of the *Integrity Act 2009* (the Act), I submitted a 'Change of Details' form to the Registrar of Members' Interests within one month of accepting the formal offer.

When an Integrity Commissioner resigns, there is a statutory process to follow which is set out in section 78 of the Act.

In accordance with section 78 of the Act, on Wednesday 19 January 2022, by confidential signed notice provided to the Office of the Honourable Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Premier and Minister for the Olympics, and the Office of the DG, DPC, I informed of my resignation with an effective date of 4 July 2022.

Pursuant to section 78(2) of the Act, as soon as practicable after receiving a signed notice of resignation the Premier must give the notice to the Governor, and a copy to the Speaker and the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Economics and Governance Committee (PEGC).

I understand that details of my confidential notice were provided to the media before the statutory processes had been completed.

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As indicated above, the effective date of my resignation is 4 July 2022.

By providing notice of my resignation at the earliest stage, I hoped to ensure that the Government had sufficient time, taking into account pandemic priorities, to recruit and appoint a replacement prior to the completion of my tenure as Integrity Commissioner.

I also wished to be able to assist the PEGC as it considers and responds to the Review, and the Government as it subsequently considers its response to the PEGC Inquiry into the Review.

The Integrity Commissioner occupies a unique and important position of trust. Throughout my time as Integrity Commissioner, I have been treated with dignity and respect by all Members of Parliament.

It has been, and remains, my honour and privilege to have been entrusted with the role of providing independent and apolitical advice to the elected representatives chosen by the people of Queensland to represent them in Parliament.

Further, I am humbled to be Queensland's first female Integrity Commissioner, and to have been at the helm during a period of unprecedented growth and change for the role.

Whilst I will no doubt be sad to leave the role in July, I am pleased that the next Commissioner will have an opportunity to build on the work of previous Integrity Commissioners and take the office forward into the future.

To that end I would strongly encourage those with expertise in ethics, governance, and administrative law to apply. It is the public purpose opportunity of a lifetime, and you can make a meaningful difference.

### **The resignation of Mr Alan MacSporran QC**

The timing of my resignation and the resignation of Mr Alan MacSporran QC, Chair of the Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC) is coincidental.

My resignation has been considered and planned for some time and could not be regarded as unexpected.

Throughout my tenure as Integrity Commissioner, my staff and I have worked closely with Mr MacSporran QC and the CCC on a number of matters and endeavors including education and training for statutory boards and bodies; and education and training for local governments.

As well, Mr MacSporran QC and I worked together on a number of important integrity initiatives including co-hosting, together with the Hon. Ann Vanstone QC (South Australian Independent Commissioner against Corruption), the inaugural Integrity Summit ('Lobbying Summit') which was held last year and attended by representatives from every Australian jurisdiction.

I greatly valued Mr MacSporran's involvement and input into our collaborative work and I wish him all the best for the future.

### **Governance and oversight**

With respect to recent media reports regarding the Public Service Commission (PSC) and various matters that are in the public domain, I have previously stated my views that it is essential that advisees and the public generally have absolute confidence that the Integrity Commissioner is able to discharge their functions without undue interference by any person or entity.

The Integrity Commissioner is an independent statutory officer whose functions extend well beyond the scope of the PSC.

Given the independence and importance of the position of Integrity Commissioner, it is not appropriate that the PSC has authority over the budget, staff, and resources provided to support the Integrity Commissioner.

The provision of financial and administrative support for the Integrity Commissioner through the PSC creates the potential for conflicts of interest to arise between the two entities' functions.

Further, the current governance arrangements operate in a such a way as to place the Integrity Commissioner in a position of inherent vulnerability, due to dependence on the PSC exercising its considerable powers in a judicious manner.

I understand from media reports yesterday that there have been calls for a formal review or investigation into the way that the PSC has discharged their functions and responsibilities in relation to the office of the Integrity Commissioner in recent times. I support that call.

**End of statement.**