

12th February 2008

Dr David Solomon
Chair
FOI Independent Review Panel
Level 9
239 George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

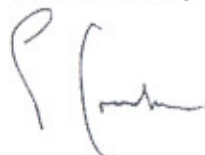
Integrity Commissioner

Dear Dr Solomon

I refer to the FOI Independent Review and wish to make a submission in relation thereto. I will confine my comments to general observations that relate to integrity in public administration.

1. In my view an approach predicated on openness is the preferable one. Essentially information held by government should be available to citizens unless there are compelling reasons of public policy to withhold it.
2. Experience seems to indicate that blanket protections are likely to be abused (e.g. matters before Cabinet). Any category of exception should be required to pass the public interest test before exclusion is justified.
3. The importance of leadership espousing these principles cannot be overstated. Otherwise the situation found by Geoff Davies QC in relation to the "cover up" culture of Queensland Health will be perpetuated.
4. It is no small challenge to bring about the cultural change necessary to gain acceptance of, and adherence to, the contemplated change of approach. No doubt a demonstrable change of approach emanating from the top would be a very useful starting point. Perhaps the hitherto sacred preserve of Cabinet Secrecy could be visited with a fresh mindset. Consideration could be given to such expedients as publishing a list of Cabinet Agenda items. Perhaps later, an appropriate summary of decisions could be published. No doubt there are other worthy initiatives, but such would be a concrete demonstration of a real change from existing practices and attitudes.

Yours sincerely



Gary Crooke QC
Queensland Integrity Commissioner