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'It turns out that warnings appear accurate': LNP fronts Premier on Ipswich

By Felicity Caldwell
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Queensland's premier has been challenged over her dismissals of an MP's warnings about Ipswich, as the city lost its second mayor in less than a year and the government prepared to ask the council to show cause.



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On Wednesday afternoon, [the Crime and Corruption Commission charged mayor Andrew Antoniolli with seven counts of fraud.](#)

A day later, Cr Antoniolli said he would stand down.



Local Government Minister Stirling Hinchliffe: Stirling Hinchliffe: the Ipswich council "can no longer function effectively".

Photo: AAP/Dave Hunt

Within minutes, Local Government Minister Stirling Hinchliffe announced that following urgent legal advice, the government would start the process of [appointing an administrator](#) at the council.

He said he would on Thursday ask the council to show cause as to why they should not be dismissed.

During question time in Parliament, LNP leader Deb Frecklington asked Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk about dismissing Labor member for Bundamba Jo-Ann Miller's concerns about Ipswich as "[Jo-Ann being Jo-Ann](#)" last year.

"As it turns out that warnings appears accurate ... Will the Premier accept responsibility for the situation in Ipswich?" Ms Frecklington asked.



LNP leader Deb Frecklington asked if the Premier would accept responsibility for the situation in Ipswich.

Ms Palaszczuk said Queensland had an independent watchdog in the Crime and Corruption Commission, and as soon as charges were laid, her government acted swiftly.

"The CCC has been formally investigating a number of councils and my government has acted today," she said.

Ms Palaszczuk said the people of Ipswich had been through turmoil.

"It is bitterly disappointing, the way in which the people of Ipswich have been let down," she said.

"We 100 per cent support the CCC's investigation, and I think all members of this house support that CCC investigation, and when we get reports about that and when issues are raised publicly, we take action."

Ms Miller told journalists she had been making complaints about the Ipswich council in Parliament, to the government and the CCC, for more than 14 years.

"Today's announcement ends the tyranny in Ipswich. It has been a shocking state of affairs," she said.

Ms Miller confirmed she had confronted Mr Hinchliffe: "I just made it very politely but very clearly to him that the people of Ipswich deserved better".

She said she believed the saga could have been prevented.

"For 14 years I have been raising these issues about the alleged corruption in Ipswich," she said.

Ms Miller said her office helped many people write to Deputy Premier and former local government minister Jackie Trad with complaints about the Ipswich council.

She said today was a good day for the people of Ipswich.

"It is a lesson for all local government, and government of all levels, that no one is beyond justice," Ms Miller said.

"Justice is finally served for the long-suffering residents of Ipswich who have only wanted a council that is focused on outcomes for residents and the city, not the councillors feathering their nest."

Asked when she was first warned about issues in Ipswich, Ms Trad said if people had allegations about corrupt activity, they needed to be presented to the appropriate authority.

"Anyone can get up and say whatever they like but if they don't have evidence, Mr Speaker, then they are hollow words," she said.

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Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk gestures during question time.

Ms Frecklington, who yesterday called for the government to immediately appoint an administrator to the Ipswich council, said she was pleased Mr Hinchliffe had moved to dissolve the council.

"But the Palaszczuk government must do much more to restore public confidence," she said.

"The Labor member for Bundamba and former Labor member for Cairns [Rob Pyne] both raised the alarm about Ipswich City Council, but the Premier ignored and shunned them."

Mr Pyne told Fairfax Media: "I'm certainly given some faith in the system that there's some enforcement taking place.

"It would be lovely if some who were in the last Parliament could issue an apology but I've been in politics too long to expect that."

Ipswich councillors will be given a "reasonable" amount of time* to explain why they should not be sacked.

If councillors are dismissed, administrators will be brought in after then.

An Ipswich council spokesman said the council was considering its options and intended to show cause within the required time frame.

- with Mark Solomons

** Correction: Mr Hinchliffe's office earlier advised Ipswich councillors would be given seven days to respond*



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