

Members of the Joint Select Committee
Joint Select Committee on Ethical Conduct
Parliament House
Hobart
TAS 7000

Dr Elizabeth Smith
7, Charlton St
Cygnet
TAS 7112

Dear Members of the Joint Select Committee,

**RE: The need for Ethical and Accountable Government in Tasmania.
Recommendations for Independent Investigative Body.**

Over the past few years there have been many allegations of corruption within the Tasmanian State Government, and these have resulted in loss of respect for politicians at all levels of Government, and to a certain degree a lack of trust in the public service as being prepared to provide "frank and fearless" advice to politicians.

In order to achieve ethical and accountable government at both Local and State levels, new systems must be put in place to address the real and perceived shortcomings of the present system. I understand that your committee will report to the Tasmanian parliament, and hope that, as a result, an independent body will be established to address questions of corruption and ethical misconduct in Tasmania, and that your report will recommend a body which has both investigative and educational aspects.

It has recently been alleged that there has been political interference in judicial appointments in Tasmania, and appointments to senior executive positions, such as the head of the Public Service, have not been advertised. Thorough and impartial selection processes, based on merit, for such important positions, cannot therefore have been followed. A formal and impartial process for appointments, through advertisement of the position and an approved selection process, is required for all appointments to senior executive positions, at both State and Local Government level. Only through the establishment of such an open and transparent process, will trust in governance be renewed. Whose role is it to establish such a process?

I have had recent experience of applying to the Ombudsman, and have found the process to be lacking in fairness, in that the complaint was not fully investigated as requested, and the explanation provided by the government agency about which the complaint was lodged was accepted as adequate, despite its obvious shortcomings. If more details are required I can supply them. Thus it appears that the only existing system that should, in theory, ensure good governance is not working, and that there is no independent investigative body in Tasmania that is capable of addressing issues of governance in a way that is confidential, professional and impartial.

The Joint Select Committee should recommend the establishment of an independent anti-corruption body which reports back to parliament on a regular basis. It should have at least one member, and perhaps more, from other States, (since Tasmania has such a small population in which most highly qualified people are known to one another) and a guaranteed budget, so that the organisation has no concerns about losing the Government's financial support due to the effective of its activities.

I look forward to your response and recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Smith BSc, PhD, Grad Dip Env Planning

31st July 2008