

Legislative Council

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INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION BILL

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON (22:07): I rise to indicate that I will be supporting the second reading of this bill. I will not go into as great detail as I did on 26 September 2007 and 15 October 2008, but I will reiterate that I believe that this is probably one of the most important bills that we will debate in this place and also remind members that my concerns about an ICAC are really that we do not have an independent commission against corruption that merely deals with politically advantageous issues, and this ICAC would actually deal with the concerns of everyday citizens concerning the corruption of process of government departments that I, and other members in here, hear about multiple times in a day. I think it is very important, if we are going to insist on an ICAC, that we actually take those matters into consideration.

The fact is that we get those complaints in here every day—I do, and more than once a day—mainly because the government says we have so many levels of review that it is all just working fine and dandy in South Australia. But, in actual fact, if our ministerial officers; ombudsmen; commissioners for public employment, equal opportunity, health and community services complaints; the Legal Practitioners Conduct Board; Medical Board; Police Complaints Authority; court authorities; and countless other such review and oversight bodies actually worked to deliver justice, we would not be sitting here having this debate. It seems that the opposition and crossbenchers are the only ones who acknowledge that we have serious issues in this state as far as following through on appropriate policy and enforcement of legislation. I believe it is time to get that in order.

I relate to members here that I am considering moving some amendments. They are not going to be complicated amendments, but they will look to provide a level of protection, as I have said, to whistleblowers as well. The honourable Vickie Chapman of the opposition stated during the election campaign that the Whistleblower Protection Act needed to be reviewed, and we here have all acknowledged that at some stage. When the Hon. Robert Lawson was here, he stated that it was a most useless piece of legislation, and I tend to agree with him. I think that, if we are going to have an ICAC here in South Australia, and if we are going to actually rely on whistleblowers from time to time to bring issues to that ICAC, those whistleblowers need to have extended protection under the ICAC bill other than the flimsy protection that is afforded to them under the Whistleblowers Protection Act.

I hope honourable members here will support—as I believe they will—an ICAC in South Australia. I hope that the government this time around sees common sense. They could perhaps attribute a part of the swing against them in some seats in the last election to the fact that they were not listening to the people about this very issue.