Operation Belcarra: A blueprint for integrity and addressing corruption risk in local government

Following the Queensland local government elections on 19 March 2016, the Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC) received numerous complaints about the conduct of candidates for several councils, including Gold Coast, Ipswich, Moreton Bay and Logan. The CCC commenced Operation Belcarra to determine whether candidates committed offences under the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* that could constitute corrupt conduct, and to identify practices that may give rise to actual or perceived corruption, and reforms to help prevent or decrease corruption risks and increase public confidence.

The CCC has found widespread non-compliance with legislative obligations relating to local government elections and political donations. This non-compliance is largely caused by a deficient legislative and regulatory framework. The CCC's 31 recommendations will strengthen equity, transparency, integrity and accountability in local governments throughout Queensland. Taken together, they will create new obligations for candidates, councillors, donors and the ECQ and form the basis of a more stringent regulatory framework.

The table below summarises the recommendations.

Recommendation	No.
Consider the introduction of campaign expenditure caps	1
Introduce real-time disclosure of electoral expenditure	2
Make all candidates' interests, including party political membership, known to voters before polling day	3,4
More clearly define what is meant by a "group" of candidates	5
Ensure all donations are known to voters before polling day	16
Make more information about donors and donations available to the public	6, 7, 17, 18,19
Prohibit donations from property developers to local government councillors and candidates	20
Improve compliance by candidates and donors with disclosure obligations	8–13
Improve candidates' management of campaign funds	14, 15
Improve how councillors identify and manage conflicts of interest	21–28
Strengthen regulatory responses to non-compliance	29–31

For more detail and to read the recommendations in context, see:

- Full list of recommendations
- Full report