

MLC 'stunned' at questions left unresolved

# Webb call to retract Blake report



Independent MLC for Nelson Meg Webb holds a dossier of evidence that was not available to the Blake Review. She wants Premier Jeremy Rockliff to retract the findings of the report, which was delivered last Friday. Picture: David Killick

## David Killick

The Blake Report into the conduct of senior public servants should be withdrawn because it was based on staggeringly deficient evidence, an independent MLC says.

Former Tasmanian Auditor-General Mike Blake examined whether any public sector department bosses breached the State Service Code of Conduct in relation to matters raised in the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.

In his final report, released last Friday, Mr Blake identified no failures by those covered by his terms of reference.

But he did not have access to commission transcripts, did not inquire about a list of pub-

lic servants potentially involved in misconduct, did not know of a critical prior report and did not have access to the head of the state service.

Brandishing a dossier of evidence Mr Blake could not access, the independent member for Nelson Meg Webb called for the report to be urgently retracted.

"Following an MPs-only briefing provided today by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the reviewer Mr Blake, I can only come to the conclusion that the urgent and responsible course of action is for the Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, to immediately withdraw and retract the Blake Review report," Ms Webb said.

"I do not make that call lightly. It came to light in today's briefing that the reviewer was unaware of the existence of pertinent Com-

mission of Inquiry transcripts and statements, which have been removed from the current documentation available on the commission website," she said.

"Further, despite referencing two earlier reports into complaints involving department heads at the time, the reviewer was unaware there were three such reports, one involving a separate head of agency additional to those reports cited by Mr Blake.

"It also defies comprehension that the review cannot confirm nor deny whether the list of 22 recipients of section 18 misconduct notices by the commission contains any former or current public sector secretaries, due to that question not being asked.

"Despite accessing an unredacted version of the Commission of Inquiry's report, the

failure to be provided all relevant transcripts and statements instead of only relying on those currently on the public website, automatically renders this review incomplete as it does not scrutinise all relevant material."

Ms Webb intends to move for the re-establishment of the Legislative Council Select Committee into the Government's Response to the Commission of Inquiry Recommendations at the earliest opportunity once parliament resumes.

That committee was due to hear from the Premier and other ministers, but was dissolved when the election was called.

Ms Webb said given the seriousness of the issue, the depth and strength of ongoing community disquiet, the government should have provided

all relevant materials to Mr Blake's inquiry.

"The reviewer should never have been put in the position of having to know or guess what materials may exist relevant to his review in order to know what documents to request," she said.

"While I appreciate the fact the briefing was offered and provided, I am stunned and gravely concerned over the number and range of serious and outstanding questions left unresolved."

A government spokesman said there was nothing wrong with the report.

"The government has accepted Mike Blake's findings and is considering his recommendations," the spokesman said. "We thank Mr Blake for his work and his generous offer to brief MPs."

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