



THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

Media Release

8 August 2023

Councillor Code of Conduct complaints resolved

West Coast Regional Council Chair, Peter Haddock, has prepared the following statement regarding the two Code of Conduct complaints that were resolved at a meeting of Council on 8 August 2023.

“In May 2023, Councillor Alan Birchfield made a complaint to Council about being assaulted by Councillor Dooley during a meeting with other Councillors.

This allegation has been investigated by an independent barrister who has found that no assault occurred.

On behalf of Council, I would like to acknowledge the impact that this allegation has had on Councillor Dooley and note that this outcome clears his name as no wrongdoing occurred.

Further, we wish to express our thanks to Councillor Dooley for his full cooperation throughout this process, and his ongoing hard work and diligence across the Committees he is involved in.

During the above process, Council received a code of conduct complaint from Councillor Frank Dooley for the alleged leaking of confidential information by Councillor Birchfield.

An independent barrister was appointed to investigate the allegation and has found, on the balance of probabilities, that Councillor Birchfield did leak confidential information to the media and has acted in a clear breach of Council’s Code of Conduct.

As a result of these actions, Council has resolved today, to remove Councillor Birchfield from all committees and public excluded parts of those committee until Council is satisfied that trust has been restored. Under the Local Government Act, Councillors are unable to remove Councillor Birchfield from Council as he has been democratically elected. The Member must also agree to cease the behaviour and tender an apology to previous Chief Executive, Heather Mabin.

As Councillors, we are disappointed that that these events have occurred, however we have acted decisively and within the power available to us. Actions such as these are unacceptable.

Finally, I would like to note that these matters are between Councillors and are in no way a reflection of the hard work of staff and the ongoing success of Council in the delivery of its work programmes.”

ENDS

Media Contact

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