

Media release - Toowoomba auction notices report

Ombudsman releases report on Toowoomba Regional Council Auction Notices

21 December 2016

Queensland Ombudsman Phil Clarke today released an investigative report that found Toowoomba Regional Council's decision to include the name of a homeowner on an auction notice it erected outside of their property when selling it for overdue rates was unreasonable.

Including homeowners' names in auction notices can cause unnecessary distress and humiliation to some owners of land. This is a reasonably foreseeable response when it is made public in a person's community, particularly those in a tight knit community, that they cannot pay their bills.

The investigation was launched following receipt of a complaint from the homeowner.

Mr Clarke recommended that council:

- cease including landowners' names in its auction notices
- review the information that is publicly available relating to land to be sold for overdue rates and charges and make changes to its procedures to ensure no unnecessary publishing of a landowner's name occurs.

The Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning has agreed to provide advice to all Queensland councils to the effect that it is not necessary under the legislative scheme for landowner's names to be published by councils in auction notices.

The Queensland Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Parliament.

The Ombudsman ensures public agencies make fair and balanced decisions for Queenslanders by investigating complaints and conducting own-initiative investigations that tackle broader, systemic concerns.

The Ombudsman can investigate complaints about state government departments, local councils and publicly-funded universities.

The Ombudsman can make recommendations to rectify unfair or unjust decisions and improve administrative practice.

The [Toowoomba Regional Council Auction Notices Report: An investigation of action taken by Toowoomba Regional Council](#) to name a homeowner on an auction notice when selling their property for overdue rates was published under the authority of the Speaker on 21 December 2016.

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