

MEDIA RELEASE

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CCC reports on Road Safety Commission Western Force partnership

The Corruption and Crime Commission has today tabled in State Parliament its report into the Road Safety Commission Western Force partnership in 2017.

The partnership involved the re-direction of \$1.5 million of Road Trauma Trust Account (RTTA) funds to the then Australian Rugby Union owned Western Force.

Allegations arose from the Special Inquiry into Government Programs and Projects. The Special Inquirer raised concerns about, amongst other things, the potential unlawfulness of redirecting funds to the Western Force and the conduct of the State's first Road Safety Commissioner, Kim Papalia, and the Road Safety Commission Director of Operations and Programs, Chris Adams.

Hundreds of millions of dollars – mainly from speed camera traffic fines – go into the RTTA every year to advance road safety initiatives. Funds are required to be allocated in accordance with the *Road Safety Council Act 2002* and the Minister is to have regard to recommendations of the Road Safety Council before allocating funds.

In 2016/17, the then Minister allocated the entire 2016/2017 RTTA budget, which was in excess of \$177 million, without regard to a recommendation from the Council. Unbeknown to the Minister, Mr Papalia's conduct in excluding the Council, in the Commission's opinion, led the Minister into acting beyond her power. This had fatal flow on effects to any re-direction of funds to the Western Force.

The \$1.5 million redirected to the Western Force came from a portion of 'underspend' of \$14.5 million that had been allocated to Main Roads Electronic School Zone Sign project. Mr Papalia recommended the redirection to the Western Force – without the Road Safety Council's awareness. The Minister accepted the recommendation the day before the Government went into caretaker mode.

Mr Adams managed the projects funded through the RTTA and had day-to-day responsibility for the partnership.

The Commission's investigation did not reveal that Mr Papalia or Mr Adams had acted corruptly or engaged in serious misconduct.

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It notes:

- Mr Papalia did not discharge his duties as head of a government department or Chair of the Road Safety Council as well as he could have;
- his exclusion of Council from necessary processes was not justifiable or excusable – but, in the context of the government road safety agenda, did not amount to serious misconduct;
- the investigation uncovered a tension between the government’s road safety agenda and legislative scheme, which created an awkward operating environment for the Road Safety Council and Mr Papalia. The territory was complex to navigate and needed a diligent operator to ensure proper processes were followed;
- the investigation did not:
 - uncover evidence of a corrupt motive on the part of any public officer;
 - demonstrate Road Safety Commission officers received a financial benefit from the Western Force partnership;
 - identify any political interference in the allocation to the Western Force.

The Commission’s report is its 17th to be tabled in State Parliament in 2018. Reports during the year have focussed on the use of force by police and in our prison system, procurement and governance, data and disclosure of information, policy and regulation, and people at risk.

The Commission will continue with similar strategic priorities in 2019 and welcomes the assistance it receives from whistle blowers, inside and outside the public sector.

Complaints and allegations can be made anonymously to the Corruption and Crime Commission on 1800 809 000 or visit www.ccc.wa.gov.au.

ENDS

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