



10 December 2020

Public examinations into a regional housing project and employment roorts

Transcript - Opening remarks # 2 by Acting Commissioner, Scott Ellis

We now move to the second phase of this week's hearings.

In the earlier evidence, we considered transactions that were brokered by Mr Whyte.

In this phase we will start looking at the question of the extent to which Mr Whyte was the effective cause of the outbreak of serious misconduct in the Department of Housing.

Did Mr Whyte infect the Department with a corrupt attitude and outlook? Or was Mr Whyte merely the most obvious symptom of an underlying malaise in the Department of Housing?

More importantly, what was it that permitted or enabled transactions or practices to occur which had no real benefit to the State or the people who relied on the Department for affordable housing?

This is the question with broader significance than Mr Whyte's particular activities.

Again, I consider that it is in the public interest for the hearing to be conducted in public, although they involve different transactions. I have taken the considerations identified in section 140 of the Act into account in reaching this conclusion.

The Commission may, of course, decide that parts of the hearing should take place in private.

I have appointed Ms Pantano as counsel on behalf of the Commission. I invite her to make opening submissions.