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Former Public Trustee boss Peter Carne has lost a legal gambit to block the release of a CCC report

A former top public servant in Queensland has just lost a legal bid to prevent the release of a CCC report into his alleged wrongdoing.

CITY BEAT Anthony Marx

2 min read September 14, 2021 - 4:43PM The Australian Business Network

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Former Public Trustee of Queensland boss Peter Carne.

What's in the report and what doesn't he want us to see?

Peter Carne, the former head of the Public Trustee of Queensland, has just lost his legal bid to suppress a report by the Crime and Corruption Commission into his alleged wrongdoing while at the helm of the agency.

As a result, the material could become public at any time unless Carne, who has consistently denied any wrongdoing, decides to lodge an appeal in the Supreme Court.

The CCC has already sent its findings to the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee and asked that body to forward the report to the Speaker, who must then table it. At that point, it would become a freely available document.



Peter, Carne

Carne, a long-time Labor identity and former law partner of later premier Wayne Goss, was suspended in June 2019 from the job overseeing the chronically-troubled PT, which manages almost \$3bn in assets for about 10,000 clients.

The reasons for his shock downfall were long cloaked in secrecy and the subject of fevered speculation.

But, as we revealed last year, then-Attorney-General Yvette D'Ath cited a litany of reasons for her move, including alleged drunkenness, bullying, sexual harassment, conflicts of interest, workplace absences and inappropriate use of resources.

Just days after getting suspended, Carne learned of the CCC investigation.

The corruption watchdog quietly launched its probe in September 2018 after getting a tip off from a PT insider and subsequently interviewed 42 witnesses. But it notified Carne in April last year that it would not be launching any criminal proceedings.

or launching any criminal proceedings.

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The CCC had informed Carne only that the allegations were “potentially criminal in nature and relate to offences including fraud”. It said the primary focus was on Carne’s alleged use of PT resources, including staff, to assist with the completion of an executive MBA program at QUT that he did between 2016 and 2019.

Carne, who continued to earn his \$385,000 annual salary while on suspension, resigned from the job on July 31 last year.

Just over a month later, the CCC wrote to Carne’s lawyers saying it intended to publish the draft report and sought a response.

His legal team said there was no public interest in releasing a one-sided report, which they stressed would only inflict further reputational damage on Carne. They noted that ill health had actually prevented him from reading the draft and responding to the claims.

To prevent it ever seeing the light of day, Carne sued the CCC last October.

He claimed that publication would be “unreasonable and an abuse of power”. He even maintained that the report was actually not a “report” for the purposes of a section of the Crime and Corruption Act.

But Supreme Court Justice Peter Davis didn’t buy the arguments and dismissed the lawsuit last week.

Carne, who spent all but two years in the job since 2009, declined to respond to multiple requests for comment on Tuesday.

A Brisbane PR operative acting on his behalf has previously noted that the “matters referred to the CCC were thoroughly investigated (and) the Commission found no reason to proceed with any charge against him.”

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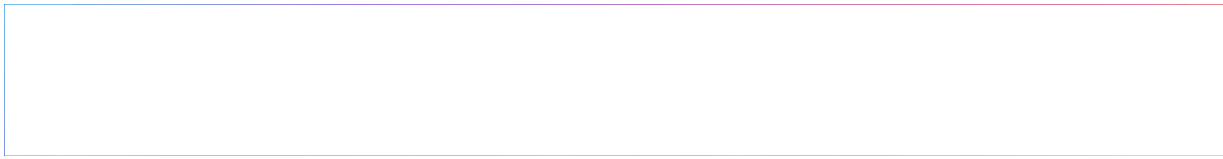
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