

[Previous Story](#)[Next Story](#)

Article rank | 24 Dec 2020 | The Cairns Post | PETER CARRUTHERS

'IT'S BEEN HORRIBLE'

Aquarium CEO's relief as funds misuse claim dismissed

THE Cairns Aquarium has been cleared of any wrongdoing over alleged misuse of COVID-19 support funding.

The aquarium was referred to the Crime and Corruption Commission last month for investigation by the State Development, Tourism and Innovation Department over alleged misuse of Industry Support Package payments.

However, on Wednesday in an open letter to the aquarium, department deputy director general Michael Carey, said referral of the matter to the CCC "should not be taken to be a finding of corrupt conduct".

"The (CCC) has assessed the matter and based on the available information (has) determined to take no further action," he said.

Aquarium chief executive Daniel Leipnik was "pleased" with the outcome that had come back so quickly. He said the situation had been a "horrible" ride.

"It's been heartbreaking as well," he said. "We feel abandoned and discarded and just treated unnecessarily considering all the good work we do in the marine science industry." "And it is embarrassing. We have had to hold press conferences and defend ourselves in the most difficult time that the industry has ever faced.

"If this year wasn't difficult enough, our hardworking staff have been accosted on the streets, gone home in tears and had to respond to suppliers questioning whether purchase orders were still valid and would be paid for."

Mr Leipnik was looking forward to funding flowing again.

"Someone overseeing this really needs to ask questions about the reason why the ISP grant was terminated to such a significantly impacted region," he said.

A \$10,000 donation to Queensland Labor in the leadup to the state election is understood not to have been sourced from grant money and was made at the request of a senior Cairns-based "operative", according to Leichhardt MP Warren Entsch.

"To come back and to think that this was to get a favour is absolute crap," he said.

Mr Entsch, in defence of the Cairns Aquarium, lashed out at Far North state MPs and called for the reinstatement of the grants. "I am calling on the minister to do the right thing and reinstate the money," he said.

Cairns MP Michael Healy said the CCC finding was a "very positive outcome".



"It's been investigated and been proven to be baseless and I am extremely happy with that outcome," he said. "(But) people need to understand there are parameters and guidelines when public money is allocated."

This article was shared by a user of PressReader - an online source of publications from around the world. PressReader contains copyrighted material, trademarks and other proprietary information. Receipt of this article should not be interpreted as grant of any licenses express or implied, to the intellectual property of PressReader or publishers of publications presented. PressReader, 200-13111 Vanier Place, Richmond BC V6V 2J1, Canada Phone: +1 604 278 4604 © 2003-2020 PressReader Inc. All rights reserved. Terms of Use: <http://care.pressreader.com/hc/articles/206528495-Terms-of-Use> Privacy Policy: <http://care.pressreader.com/hc/articles/205818089-Privacy-Policy>

[Previous Story](#)[Next Story](#)