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## **Queensland needs journalist shield laws now**

The Palaszczuk Government in Queensland needs to show it is fully committed to the public's right to know by passing laws to protect journalists who decline to reveal sources.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance welcomes today's decision by the Attorney-General Yvette D'Ath to withdraw legislation which would have imposed heavy penalties on journalists who reported on complaints or allegations made to the Crime and Corruption Commission during state elections.

But the government must demonstrate it truly supports press freedom by introducing shield laws to allow a journalist to claim legal privilege in order to protect a confidential source, said MEAA Queensland Regional Director Michelle Rae.

"Queensland is the last jurisdiction in Australia not to have shield law protection for journalists, despite numerous entreaties to successive governments of both political stripes," Ms Rae said.

"Shield laws allow journalists to claim qualified legal privilege to protect their sources.

"The protection of sources is a fundamental responsibility for ethical journalism recognised the world over.

"Without this protection, whistleblowers and other sources would be more reluctant to provide to journalists information which is critical for the public's right to know, to shine a light on injustices and to hold governments and powerful interests to account. Consequently, our democracy would be diminished.

"A Queensland journalist is facing further court action for protecting a confidential source right now.

"Journalists are not above the law but shield laws recognise the important role of public interest journalism in our democracy.

"Importantly, shield laws in other jurisdictions still allow for journalist privilege to be waived if a judicial officer is satisfied that it is in the public interest to do so.

"Queensland already had a low standing for press freedom among Australian states and territories before the botched introduction of legislation which would have gagged journalists from reporting if an election candidate was under investigation for corruption.

"The Palaszczuk Government could improve this reputation by introducing shield laws with bipartisan support from the State Opposition."

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