

rail corridor, the federal government is contributing \$740 million and the Moreton Bay Regional Council will tip in \$105 million. This partnership has only been possible because of the amalgamation of councils to form large regional councils, allowing them to focus on regional planning and giving them the budgets to develop infrastructure for the first time in their history.

No sooner had Prime Minister Gillard announced their contribution than the local LNP candidate was on radio denouncing it and stating over and over again that the cost of delivering this rail was too high at this time—this after his party had promised this very rail for the last two elections, although there was a large provision to let them out of it at the last election. With last week's promise from state and federal Labor and council, the LNP initially found the cost was too high but by the end of the day they had promised it. Can we believe them this time? This is part of a longstanding pattern. For many years the local federal LNP member ran her campaigns on 'we need a new bridge' until this state Labor government promised to deliver it. The LNP state candidate who ran against me was warned not to promise the bridge because they would not be delivering a bridge. Instead, they started on their rail to Redcliffe campaign. But they were never any more serious about the rail than they were about the bridge. They ran on their promise of the rail to Redcliffe again at the last election without any real intention to deliver.

Tony Abbott is belatedly promising the rail in this federal election. Was it just a statement he made off the cuff when he was overexcited? Or is this a real policy? Has he contacted either the state or the local government to back up his media announcement? Is this even a core promise? Can we afford to risk the future economic and social wellbeing of Redcliffe people and people right across the Moreton Bay region on that history? The Bligh government stands behind its promises and we do not promise what we will not deliver. For the Bligh government this rail is an intrinsic part of our plan to deliver better quality public transport for South East Queenslanders.

The limited sale and leasing of assets has ensured that the Queensland government can invest in this vital public transport to improve the lifestyles of all South East Queenslanders, ensuring that people across this high growth area will have effective public transport, cutting congestion on the roads from the north and giving a wider range of people the opportunity to take up employment across the south-east region. And this, for our region, is very important for youth to be able to get employment. This rail is a win for all of the people of Redcliffe and right across the Moreton Bay Regional Council area. I am proud to be a part of the Bligh Labor government that has delivered it, ensuring Queenslanders get the best public transport system in the country and have the infrastructure we need to keep our state moving ahead.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! The time for matters of public interest has expired.

MINISTERIAL AND OTHER OFFICE HOLDER STAFF BILL

First Reading

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (12.34 pm): I present a bill for an act to provide for the employment and conduct of staff of ministers and other particular members of parliament. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Tabled paper: Ministerial and Other Office Holder Staff Bill 2010.

Tabled paper: Ministerial and Other Office Holder Staff Bill 2010, explanatory notes.

Second Reading

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (12.34 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill is the first of three bills that I will be introducing today. Together, these bills represent the second stage of a comprehensive suite of legislative reforms that this government committed to implementing in 2009 in the *Response to Integrity and Accountability in Queensland*.

The Ministerial and Other Office Holder Staff Bill 2010 delivers on our commitment to introduce new stand-alone legislation for the employment of ministerial staff. As our system of government has evolved, so, too, have the roles of ministerial staff. Ministerial staff play an important role which is different from but complementary to the independent and apolitical nature of the Public Service.

Queensland is again proving to be a leader among Australian state and territory governments by laying down a formal legislative framework which recognises the realities of the working relationship

between the administrative and political arms of government. The bill provides a discrete framework for the employment of ministerial staff distinct from the Public Service, thus reflecting the differing and quite separate roles of ministerial staff and public servants.

The bill provides for the appointment of ministerial staff, staff of the Leader of the Opposition and staff of other non-government members of parliament where appropriate. Currently these staff are employed under the Public Service Act 2008 without recognition of the very distinct roles these staff play from the rest of the Public Service.

Ministerial staff members will be appointed by the director-general of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, upon recommendations from the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition or the relevant member of parliament. The bill sets out explicit parameters around the powers, roles and responsibilities of these staff. Importantly, the bill specifically provides that ministerial staff are not empowered to direct public servants in their own right. The bill includes work performance obligations which supplement the ethics values in the Public Sector Ethics Act 1994 and create obligations for staff members to act honestly, efficiently, with integrity and in the public interest.

While the employment regime will be separated from the Public Service, the conditions of employment of staff members will remain aligned with those which apply to public servants. The bill includes provision for: ministerial staff members to provide annual declarations of interest; application of codes of conduct to ministerial staff; and continuation of the current application of the Crime and Misconduct Commission, Ombudsman and offences under the Criminal Code.

Positive interactions between the Public Service and ministerial staff can contribute to effective governance and maximise the efficient and effective delivery of government services. This bill provides a firm foundation upon which this can continue to occur with due regard for the need to preserve the apolitical and independent character of the Queensland Public Service.

This bill emphasises the government's commitment to ensuring that appropriate frameworks are in place to guide the interactions between ministerial staff and Public Service employees. In addition to introducing this bill, we have implemented a range of complementary measures, including amending standard employment contracts and issuing a communique to clearly articulate my expectations of the standards of conduct in interactions between ministerial staff and public servants.

This bill recognises that ministerial staff perform an important role in the business of government by facilitating communication of ministerial priorities to departments and acting as a conduit between ministers and Public Service employees, including communicating ministerial views and decisions or requesting advice or other work to be undertaken to assist the minister in the performance of their duties and responsibilities.

As the way in which government business is done continues to evolve and change, so, too, must our governance structures evolve and change to ensure that everyone, from ministers to ministerial staff, chief executives and Public Service employees, clearly understands their powers, roles and responsibilities. This bill is therefore an important next step in this government's continued commitment to a contemporary and robust integrity and accountability framework. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

~~PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE BILL~~

~~First Reading~~

~~Hon. AM Blich (South Brisbane ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (12.39 pm): I present a bill for an act to facilitate the disclosure, in the public interest, of information about wrongdoing in the public sector, to provide protection for those who make disclosures and to make minor or consequential amendments of the legislation stated in schedule 3. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—~~

~~That the bill be now read a first time.~~

~~Question put That the bill be now read a first time.~~

~~Motion agreed to.~~

~~Bill read a first time.~~

~~Tabled paper: Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2010.~~

~~Tabled paper: Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2010, explanatory notes.~~

~~Second Reading~~

~~Hon. AM Blich (South Brisbane ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (12.39 pm): I move—~~

~~That the bill be now read a second time.~~