

~~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 BLYTH (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 BLYTH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (12.39 pm): I move—
That the bill be now read a second time.

The Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2010 is one of three bills introduced today which represents the second stage of integrity reforms announced in the *Response to Integrity and Accountability in Queensland* last year. This bill delivers on our commitment to reform whistleblowers protection legislation. The bill replaces the Whistleblowers Protection Act 1994 and puts in place significant reforms following consideration of the recommendations of the Whistling While They Work project. This bill builds upon the framework established under the existing Whistleblowers Protection Act and maintains the protections and rights of disclosers.

Additionally and importantly, the bill will expand the scope of Queensland's whistleblower legislation so that, for the first time in Queensland, it will also provide protection for disclosures to the media in certain circumstances. While the government still believes that public interest disclosures should be made to, investigated and dealt with by the public sector, we also acknowledge that there will be some circumstances where providing information about wrongdoing to the media is in the public interest to ensure inappropriate behaviour can be uncovered and appropriately dealt with.

Protection will therefore be provided for people to make disclosures to the media if they have not been able to have the matter resolved through disclosure to the appropriate public sector entity. This avenue provides further assurances that this government is committed to protecting its whistleblowers and ensuring that they can have the confidence to report corrupt or inappropriate practices.

The bill also strengthens processes around the management of public interest disclosures by creating a new independent oversight role for the Public Service Commission. All chief executives will be required to ensure that minimum standards are in place within their agencies, including ensuring that appropriate action is taken on all public interest disclosures and ensuring support and protection is offered to disclosers, as well as developing and implementing management programs.

In addition, we are extending the operation of the act to government owned corporations for disclosures relating to official misconduct, to match the recent expansion in the jurisdiction of the CMC; creating a new vicarious liability provision which will hold public sector agencies liable where they allow employees to take reprisal against a whistleblower; and establishing a new cost effective avenue for any person who has suffered a reprisal to make a claim under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991, in addition to seeking damages through the Supreme Court.

The Public Interest Disclosure Bill provides an important mechanism for facilitating scrutiny and supporting people who do the right thing and stand up to wrongdoing. This bill is a crucial part of maintaining a strong ethical culture in the Queensland public sector. This bill ensures that Queensland's legislation is of the highest standard. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Springborg, adjourned.

~~INTEGRITY REFORM (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL~~

~~First Reading~~

~~Hon. AM BLYTH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (12.42 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Ambulance Service Act 1991, the Auditor General Act 2009, the Civil Liability Act 2003, the Corrective Services Act 2006, the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990, the Government Owned Corporations Act 1993, the Integrity Act 2009, the Ombudsman Act 2001, the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001, the Public Sector Ethics Act 1994, the Public Service Act 2008, the Public Service Regulation 2008, the Right to Information Act 2009 and the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 for particular purposes. 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: Integrity Reform (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2010.~~

~~Tabled paper: Integrity Reform (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2010, explanatory notes.~~

~~Second Reading~~

~~Hon. AM BLYTH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (12.43 pm): I move — That the bill be now read a second time.~~

~~The final bill in this legislative reform package I am introducing today, the Integrity Reform (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2010, implements a range of reforms through amendments to a number of Queensland acts. As part of the government's *Response to Integrity and Accountability in Queensland*, we announced that we would introduce a single code of conduct for the Public Service. We~~