

~~Queensland to be treated the same way as other states such as New South Wales, which is getting an 80-20 funding deal from the federal government for the Pacific Highway.'~~

~~I will keep pressing the case, but perhaps the people of Logan and the Gold Coast have some hope now that Tony Abbott has been dumped—dumped in the same way voters dumped the former premier in the Queensland LNP government who signed the deal for zero dollars. I call on the members opposite to right their wrongs and take the opportunity presented by the new national leadership. I call on them to pen a letter today to their federal minister for infrastructure, to their federal member for Forde and to their new Prime Minister and demand federal funding for the road improvements that their communities and mine deserve.→~~

QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL

<Introduction



Hon. CW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (12.27 pm): <I present a bill for an act to establish the Queensland Productivity Commission >and to amend this act, the City of Brisbane Regulation 2012, the Industrial Relations Regulation 2011, the Local Government Regulation 2012, the Payroll Tax Act 1971, the Queensland Competition Authority Act 1997, and the Queensland Competition Authority Regulation 2007 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Finance and Administration Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2015.

Tabled paper: Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2015, explanatory notes.

During the 2015 state election, the government committed to establish the Queensland Productivity Commission as an independent economic advisory body with the broad objective of lifting productivity. Improved productivity drives economic growth and improves living standards.

The Queensland Productivity Commission Bill establishes the commission as a statutory body to formalise its operational independence from government, confirm the commission's functions and mandate, and put in place its corporate governance framework. The commission will provide expert, professional advice in policy areas of particular complexity and, sometimes, sensitivity, as referred to it by government. It will conduct inquiries through an open and transparent process informed by widespread public consultation. The commission reports will be independent in character, of high quality and have the capacity to significantly contribute to the policy development process. However, as an advisory body, any commission recommendations will ultimately be a matter for government to decide upon.

The government has already announced that the first major task of the commission will be an inquiry into electricity prices. The inquiry will balance a range of competing interests by taking into account customer impacts and the need for a competitive electricity market, efficient investment in infrastructure and good environmental outcomes.

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In parallel to the electricity pricing inquiry, the commission will also conduct an inquiry into a fair price for solar. This inquiry will investigate the public and private benefits of rooftop solar, including social, economic and environmental benefits. A longer term work program for the commission will be considered later this year, taking into account the government's policy priorities.

The commission will be led by principal commissioner Mr Kim Wood, who was appointed to enable the timely commencement of the energy inquiries. With his extensive knowledge of regulated industries and commercial operations, Mr Wood brings a strong set of capabilities to the role. The principal commissioner will have primary responsibility for the commission and, depending on the commission's work program, up to two other full-time or part-time commissioners may be appointed.

This type of independent economic inquiry and review body closely mirrors the Australian Productivity Commission and the New Zealand Productivity Commission. Similar to these bodies, the commission will also assume responsibility for best practice regulation, including ensuring agencies are developing quality regulatory proposals to support good policy development. It will also take over from the Queensland Competition Authority the competitive neutrality complaints function, aiming to provide a simpler, more accessible and independent competitive neutrality complaints system for any businesses with complaints against government owned businesses. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. CW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (12.31 pm): 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.

Referral to the Finance and Administration Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Finance and Administration Committee.

~~ENERGY AND WATER OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT BILL~~

~~Introduction~~

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (12.31 pm): ~~I present a bill for an act to amend the Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006 and the National Energy Retail Law (Queensland) Act 2014 for particular purposes. I table the bill and explanatory notes and I nominate the Utilities, Science and Innovation Committee to consider the bill.~~

~~Tabled paper: Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015.~~

~~Tabled paper: Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes.~~

~~I present a bill to amend the Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006 for particular purposes. These include extending access to the Energy and Water Ombudsman, known as EWOQ, for small business customers using between 100 and 160 megawatt hours of electricity per year, as well as amendments to allow for EWOQ to be recognised as an external dispute resolution scheme for the purposes of the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988. The bill includes amendments to increase transparency around EWOQ's billing practices relating to user pays fees issued to service providers. The bill also amends the National Energy Retail Law (Queensland) Act 2014 to correct an administrative numbering error that exists in the act's schedule.~~

~~Queensland small business enterprises are recognised by the government as a significant contributor to the state's economic and jobs growth and as the backbone of regional economies. That is why it is important that all small businesses are given the strongest possible support to ensure they can get on with serving and employing people right across Queensland. Many small businesses that are dependent on a high use of electricity for their daily operations often do not have the time, expertise or resources to deal with issues and disputes that may arise with their electricity accounts while still conducting their businesses. Current dispute resolution mechanisms available to these types of business customers may not be specialised enough to efficiently and effectively deal with energy related disputes. The services currently offered may cost small businesses and can be time consuming. To address this, the bill expands EWOQ's dispute resolution services to cover small, high energy using business customers, such as bakeries, small supermarkets, manufacturing businesses, amateur sporting clubs, community groups and not for profit organisations. This bill will allow these types of businesses and organisations to contact EWOQ for free assistance if they are unable to resolve a dispute with their electricity retailer. This will ensure high energy using small businesses are on a level playing field and enjoy the same access to an energy specific dispute resolution service as other small businesses. Limiting the amount of time and resources required to resolve a dispute with their electricity retailer will allow more small businesses to focus on managing their enterprises.~~

~~Changes to the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 regarding customer credit information and reporting requirements will come into effect for Queensland's retail energy and water utilities on 1 January 2016. The new credit reporting regime outlines how service providers, such as energy retailers, access personal information about an individual, including their credit history. The changes require credit providers to be members of a recognised external dispute resolution scheme, known as an EDR, in order to continue to disclose and gain access to customer credit information from a credit reporting body. Water providers in Queensland are currently either not participating in the credit reporting system or, being mostly local councils, not subject to these new requirements as they do not fall within the definition of a credit provider under the Privacy Act.~~