



Speech by

**SHAUN NELSON**

**MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS**

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Hansard 16 September 1998

**PUBLIC SERVICE AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr NELSON** (Tablelands—ONP) (4.32 p.m.): Today I rise to support the member for Surfers Paradise in relation to the Public Service Amendment Bill. I believe that the term of employment of chief executives must recognise that in most cases that term is inexorably linked to the term of the relevant Minister. It is an absurdity to postulate that a department head can be or should be apolitical. Indeed, a department head must have the political confidence of his Minister to interpret and implement the Minister's philosophies and policy direction accurately.

It may well be—and this is reality; let us face it—that the appointee may be adaptable enough to support a Government of either persuasion. In fact, these days there seems to be very little difference between the philosophies of Labor and the coalition. However, there must be the flexibility to replace the appointee if necessary—and I emphasise: only if necessary. This flexibility must be paramount in the employment contract and must not expose the public purse to a massive termination settlement. I recognise the need to attract the best possible expertise. I also acknowledge that the potentially short tenure of the appointment may be a distinct disincentive, as it is in this House. It may well be necessary to make appropriate allowance for the relative lack of security of employment. This may be by way of an increased salary package, and I am of the firm opinion that this is a more honest, accountable and transparent method of achieving that outcome.

It is indeed a grossly inefficient system that employs someone for five years when it is known full well that the contract is most likely to be terminated in a little more than half that term. I believe that, as the appointment is to all intents and purposes for the term of the Government, the contract should reflect that situation. I believe the Bill will result in a system that will be more streamlined and cleansed of unnecessary and complicated termination procedures, and that it will be more transparent, logical and acceptable to the taxpayers of Queensland.

My one concern is the fact that the Bill seeks to make the change retrospective—an aspect that I, and I suspect the majority of my colleagues, cannot support. I believe that the principle of this Bill is very important and the removal of the retrospectivity would make for good legislation. I support the Public Service Amendment Bill 1998, but flag my intention to amend it in the Committee stage to remove the retrospectivity aspects.

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