



Speech by

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SERVICE DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE COMMISSION BILL

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (4.52 pm): I rise to speak on the Service Delivery and Performance Commission Bill slightly confused as to why it is required. Governments are elected to provide the best services. The Premier is elected to oversee these services and his ministers need to ensure that funding for their portfolio areas is spent responsibly and to the people's expectations. That, to me, is fairly simple. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Burnett, who pointed out the budget expenditure from the Premier's department of \$216 million. It is considerably higher than of premier's departments in any other state. I think it is quite staggering to hear those numbers. So why then does it seem that in this state the Beattie government requires some sort of media stunt every time it wants to make a new announcement or, when its approval ratings are down, just to let the people know it still holds the treasury benches? That is how I classify the announcement of the Service Delivery and Performance Commission.

While I support moves to save taxpayers' dollars, the Beattie government clearly is taking the wrong path to saving this money. Spending \$3 million to achieve savings of just \$20 million this year is simply not good enough. We have a budget in Queensland of \$26 billion and we are expected to believe that there is only \$20 million worth of savings in terms of service delivery—0.08 per cent of the budget or 8/100ths of a per cent. I honestly hope that the Premier does not expect a pat on the back from anyone for announcing his intention to create a Service Delivery and Performance Commission, because the honest truth is that the commission the Premier is proposing will only perform one of the duties his government was elected to fulfil.

The challenges that the Service Delivery and Performance Commission will face include assessment of removing barriers between government agencies to provide efficient services and providing in-house government services at value for money. Surely that is what governments and their ministers do. Aren't governments and their ministers supposed to look at the government agencies and say, 'That's not particularly efficient so we'll remove that barrier and make that agency more efficient'? Similarly with in-house government services, they have bureaucrats who come to them and say, 'We think we can do this and do it with a more value for money approach.' No! Rather, we have a Service Delivery and Performance Commission instead.

So the government who has had problems managing Q-Fleet, Goprint, Queensland's electricity and health systems is now outsourcing the diagnosis of spending problems to a panel of experts—just another ploy from this Premier and his minions to push the blame onto someone else. Every time the opposition asks a question about some budget black hole or an ineffectual spending spree that this government embarks on, the response will be that the matter will be referred to the Service Delivery and Performance Commission, which will then report back to cabinet and no-one else. The media tart and his minions seem to trip over themselves to get a sound bite on the evening news but, when it comes to creating a commission that is ostensibly created to save Queenslanders money, how can he guarantee that it will be wholly transparent or at all independent when it is run by his former director-general, Dr Leo Keliher, and any recommendations that it makes will be taken to cabinet and will not see the light of day for 30 years?

In the Premier's speech presenting his new mini budget make-over, the Premier spoke about an independent Service Delivery and Performance Commission. How on earth can a commission be considered independent when it is immune from the Freedom of Information Act? This is almost a throwback to the golden years of the Soviet Union when the leadership knew better than the people. What will be the legacy of the Premier? He has provided us with no vision apart from the Smart State mantra, which has everyone from southern states laughing about the title, whilst drifting from crisis to crisis promising after problems have occurred to fix them and taking full responsibility. If the people of Queensland wanted someone who could diagnose the problems of Queensland, we would have a state mechanic or a state doctor who would ensure things ran smoothly by fixing problems as they occurred.

The people elect a Premier to look forward and be visionary. There is nothing visionary about bandaid solutions and apologies. Real governments get on with the job. There are several novel ways we could save money. The first would be for the government to deal with problems with some courage, addressing problems like the health crisis when they surface rather than letting them fester for several years before dealing with them. That would save us plenty of money on drawn-out inquiries into the erroneous ways of the Beattie government. If the government intends to introduce a Service Delivery and Performance Commission, I take no issue with it. But I think a guarantee of greater savings than \$20 million out of \$26 billion and some transparency are the minimum we should expect from a commission of its kind.

This government, with the able assistance of Leo Keliher, has increased the bureaucracy by 23,178 positions since taking power. This growth has come in spite of the Premier announcing in 2003 that an average of 120 jobs would be cut from the Public Service each year for the next 10 years. The bureaucracy does not need to grow any more. The government should take the lead of the Liberal Party and cut the bureaucracy in this state to provide taxpayers with more value for their dollar. I know I hear members on the other side saying that that is going to mean mass sackings. We will not be cutting them by sacking them; it can occur by natural attrition.

Another part of the proposed legislation that requires close scrutiny is that of clause 18, which confers immunity from legal liability upon persons giving information to the commission, subject only to that person acting honestly. I think it is important that giving legal immunity should include an additional requirement of absence of negligence, as noted by the concerns expressed by the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, to provide an extra safeguard for the government such that carelessness on the part of a department head would not reflect poorly on the government.

The health minister and the Premier spoke during question time this morning about their commitment to tackling the problem of Queensland's burgeoning waiting lists head-on. It is now clear the health minister has been passed a hospital pass and has been unable to make any positive ground in our public hospitals. The Premier has a real opportunity to set up the Service Delivery and Performance Commission in a manner that will make it transparent. Instead, the fear of further crises has led him to put it behind closed doors where Queenslanders can never fully appreciate the benefits it is intended to bring. While the government is pointing the compass in the right direction by feigning to save taxpayers' money, the truth is that this is just another job for Leo and will save such a negligible amount that we will need a microscope to see any tangible differences as a result of this legislation. I will not be supporting this legislation.