



Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

Hansard Tuesday, 14 September 2010

MINISTERIAL AND OTHER OFFICE HOLDER STAFF BILL; INTEGRITY REFORM (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL; PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE BILL

Mr CRANDON (Coomera—LNP) (6.04 pm): The cognate debate incorporates debate on the Public Interest Disclosure Bill 2010, the Ministerial and Other Office Holder Staff Bill 2010 and the Integrity Reform (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill. The Ministerial and Other Office Holder Staff Bill 2010 is necessary and is brought about because a ministerial adviser overstepped the mark and directed others to divert funds meant for use by a particular organisation. This is the classic master-servant relationship where the master has all the power. He wields the power and directs the public servant to do as he or she is told. It is high time that the necessary legislation be put in place.

I have to ask whether this sort of bullying is rampant not only within ministerial offices but also within departments. We have heard numerous examples brought to light by opposition members. Here is another example. A Department of Transport and Main Roads employee who fell ill had some 15 years of exemplary service. The mental health illness was partly brought about by the workload among other things. The health issues are well documented over an extended period of time by no fewer than four separate health professionals, including two psychiatrists. There are psychiatric reports as long as your arm. As well, there were workload issues brought on by workplace harassment and bullying. Combine all this with sexual harassment allegations. Amongst all of this there was a severe lack of communication from the department.

Due to the mental health issues, the employee found it difficult to give evidence. Indeed it appears that it was on the employee's psychiatrists advice that to do so could be detrimental to the employee's health. Eventually the case was finalised and it was found that there was no case to answer. There was no case to answer even though there were sexual harassment, bullying, workload issues et cetera. What do members think happened? The case was closed? No, not at all.

The department is considering charging the employee with making vexatious claims and for misconduct. Here we have an individual suffering mental health issues who could not properly give evidence. That was part of the reason for the decision that there was no case to answer. Now that person has been told that the department may pursue a case against them. It is going on and on. This person is being persecuted.

Where is the common sense in this case? It is obvious to everyone that this person is suffering mental health problems. This person needs to focus on their recovery. I call on the minister to use his discretion in this matter and call the attack dogs off. This person needs to focus on their recovery. This person is being persecuted.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Coomera, whilst there may well be some basis for this, I would prefer that you refer to the bill so that you can set a proper basis for this argument; otherwise please get on with debating the bill.

Mr CRANDON: I will finish my comments with this. This person is being persecuted by a system that appears to have given no consideration to the mental health of the individual. The minister has it in his power to stop this persecution.