


Speech by  
**Jackie Trad**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE**

Hansard Thursday, 23 August 2012

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## **PUBLIC SERVICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (5.11 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. As my colleagues have already indicated, the opposition will not be supporting this piece of legislation because it represents another disgraceful and ideological attack on public servants, the people who serve and administer our state well. What has just happened? What little bomb did the Attorney-General set off at the beginning of this debate? We see it on the electronic media. We see that this government has come into the House, without consulting one person, to take away the permanency provisions in the Public Service Act, in enterprise bargaining. That is such an outrageous move by an outrageous government that is completely drunk on its massive majority. What a surprise that the Kmart Attorney-General, rather than take his chances in the courts of this state, brings amendments into this House without consultation to make it clear that the law will fall on his side. That is an outrageous move.

This 19-page bill contains a variety of changes, most of them without valid justification. We heard the member for Noosa refer to the public sector renewal program, as did many who are sitting on the government benches. Let us be clear: there is nothing in this program that is about renewal; it is all about ruination. It is about ruining the public sector and Public Service provisions in this state. Fundamentally, these changes are based on the flawed ideology of those opposite and not on sound public policy.

Firstly, the legislation provides for the transfer of public service appeals to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. It is well known that the LNP government is refocusing the Public Service Commission away from its traditional and important regulatory function towards a public sector efficiency agenda. That is code for job cuts, sackings and purges of the Queensland Public Service. At this rate, the Public Service Commission will have to be renamed the 'public sector hatchet commission'. This bill also provides for the transfer of public interest disclosures from the Public Service Commission to the Queensland Ombudsman. Much like many of the good programs and services that are being axed or deprioritised by this government, this is an example of a good system being changed for no apparent reason. This is a register of all public interest disclosures for all Queensland government agencies, as well as local government bodies.

In a public briefing, Ms Sonia Cooper, the Acting Senior Executive for Workplace Strategy and Performance, indicated that the public interest disclosure database was being managed effectively and efficiently within its current operations. Given this information, why is the government determined to pursue these changes? The reality is that there has been no strong rationale outlined by the government, either during the public hearing or in the Premier's introductory speech, that warrants the transfer of this function that is already running efficiently and successfully.

The points I have just raised could be said to be mere administrative changes, but they are ones that are being undertaken without any clear rationale from the government. In relation to the changes to the provision to allow for widening of the scope for possible reasons for lawyers to appear in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, this is about muscling up and using the full force of government to come down on workers. Currently, the QIRC is similar to some areas of the Queensland Civil and Administrative

Tribunal in that lawyers are not allowed to appear to provide a less adversarial environment and a level playing field for all who appear before it. However, we see this LNP government continuing its attack on government workers in this state, that is, the people who make our state tick and run. By allowing greater possibilities for legal representation to appear in the QIRC, we will see a power imbalance between the employer and the Queensland government, and employees. This government is sacking Public Service workers, taking away the permanency provisions and continuing to cause fear and anxiety amongst public servants in the lead-up to the budget by making it clear that thousands and thousands more are yet to be sacked.

One of the most offensive things about this bill is the issue of consultation, which has been a particular focus of parliament this week. The *Oxford Dictionary* describes 'consultation' as—

the act of discussing something with somebody or with a group of people before making a decision about it.

To be fair, the LNP government did allow some time for consultation. It allowed a whole three working days. Does that sound familiar? I think it does. Let us couple the word 'consultation' with the word 'proper'. The *Oxford Dictionary* describes 'proper' as—

the required or correct type of form; suitable or appropriate.

I ask the question: has there been proper, meaning suitable or appropriate, consultation, meaning the act of discussing something with somebody or with a group of people, before making a decision about it? Has there been proper consultation on this? Just like with many bills that have gone before the House, the answer is no!

The Premier introduced the bill to the House on Tuesday, 31 July with an email calling for public submissions being transmitted on Wednesday, 1 August, indicating a closing date of Monday, 6 August. That provided a whole three business days for the citizens of Queensland to become aware of the legislation before the House, formulate their views and thoughts on the legislation and communicate those thoughts to the committee. Well, what a joke! I indicated that this is not the only bill on which poor and shabby consultation has been undertaken by this LNP government.

I will list a few of the bills that committees have provided scathing remarks upon about the lack of due process and consultation: the Industrial Relations (Fair Work Harmonisation) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, the Penalties and Sentences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, the Electricity (Early Termination) Amendment Bill and the Animal Care and Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I would also mention, just because it is timely, the Mines Legislation (Streamlining) Amendment Bill 2012, when there was also a full three working days in which communities in Queensland could become aware of it, consult on it and come back to the parliament on it. Apparently that bill was not urgent, as other bills were debated and passed before it had chartered its course through this place. As previous speakers have outlined, on numerous occasions in the public briefing on this bill the question was asked, 'Why wasn't further consultation undertaken?' and the answer from the department was, 'It was not government policy to consult.'

They are unfortunately correct. When it comes to changing the laws of this state, the LNP government does not want to hear from the people of Queensland, the people who have put it there and have placed an enormous amount of trust in it, and understands this. It is blatantly clear that this LNP government, led by the cruel, cold and callous Premier Newman, does not care about the hardworking men and women of the Public Service. Those opposite ideologically do not believe in the Public Service. Since they took office in late March this year, they have actively gone out of their way to cut and purge the Public Service and public services in this state. Those opposite said that these cuts would not affect front-line services, but they are wrong.

On Tuesday I was proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with my fellow ALP parliamentary colleagues with the hardworking men and women of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and the Queensland Ambulance Service. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of Katter's Australian Party and the member for Nicklin for coming down and showing their support. They are true members who stand up for their community and the members of the Public Service in this state and do not just follow the party line, like the spineless members opposite. The men and women of the Fire and Rescue Service and the Ambulance Service marched on this place to speak to their government about their pay and conditions. These people are front-line workers. They are the ones who go out on our streets day after day protecting us and looking after us when we are sick or in a car crash. They do this day in, day out. Our men and women of the Public Service are some of the finest, if not the finest, in the country. Whilst Brisbane and parts of regional Queensland were faced with the greatest—

**Government members** interjected.

**Ms TRAD:** Madam Deputy Speaker, are you going to call order?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Miss Barton): Member for South Brisbane, I can hear what you are saying and I do not see the need to call order when I am able to hear the contribution that you are making. I would thank you not to make suggestions to the chair as to how they may wish or may not wish to call order.

**Ms TRAD:** While Queensland faced the worst natural disasters in recorded history, these are the people who got up and helped recover and rebuild Queensland, and they are being paid back by this government by being sacked. The member for Gregory should hold his head down and should not look me in the eye because he knows, as I know, that these are the fine people who helped rebuild our state, and this government is sacking them in return for the good work they have done. You are shameful. You are all absolutely shameful.