




Speech by

Michael Pucci

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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PUBLIC SERVICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr PUCCI** (Logan—LNP) (4.34 pm): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I say, this is the first time I have had the opportunity to speak while you have been sitting in the chair. I just want to say congratulations and it is an honour to be here.

I rise to speak in support of the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. This bill will improve the operation of existing key Public Service legislation and facilitate the government's reform agenda through greater alignment and efficiencies in discharging its public sector integrity functions; make proactive changes to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to support the orderly and expeditious exercise of its jurisdiction and powers; and, finally, expand parties' rights to access legal representation in matters heard in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. This amendment bill, which is in keeping with our government's campaign promises to reduce red tape and generate smaller government, will in turn produce a more accountable public sector.

Streamlining operational functions and containing the escalating cost associated with the operations of a public office will reduce the tedious burden imposed on managers in the public sector. This amendment bill is in response to a series of issues that, until now, limited the operational effectiveness of the public sector. It will refocus the public sector, which currently operates on a regulatory function, and guide it towards a more efficiency based agenda.

This realignment, from the existing oversight agency to the Queensland Ombudsman, will see a reduction in the oversight duplication that currently exists, thereby reducing waste and saving taxpayers' money. Having two agencies whose purpose serves the same outcome defies the logic of a productive and efficient government. The Queensland Ombudsman is the key and effective force in dealing with the maladministration of departments and its current charter ensures that comprehensive oversight is provided for Queenslanders. This shift in focus, from the current public interest disclosure agencies towards the Ombudsman, will see an improved and more effective oversight capability in our state.

This amendment bill also makes changes to the Industrial Relations Act 1999, with specific reference to the jurisdiction and powers of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. These changes will assist both the commission and those being heard before it in an expeditious and orderly process. Changes to the act will also see greater access to legal representation, which in turn will assist government in managing negotiations that would otherwise require arbitration by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

With the perilous state that our budget and Public Service were left in, courtesy of the frivolous and often negligent managerial operational practices employed by the former Labor government, the need to establish a clear, proactive and systematic Public Service is a must. The bureaucratic entanglement that is present in the oversight of workplace dispute resolutions hampers and at times even impedes the public sector from getting the very clarity it sorely deserves. This chaotic environment is detrimental to the public sector and ultimately decreases operational effectiveness. By eliminating duplicate organisations and streamlining the administrative process, we will again cut costs, clear red tape and see real results for Queenslanders who have cases before an oversight committee.

This amendment brings about minor changes to the Industrial Relations Act 1999. The small yet significant change will push decision making in the administration of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission down from the president to vice-president. This change, though appearing minor on the surface, will increase the capabilities and powers of the QIRC by boosting its capability to appropriately delegate the necessary authority to execute its mandate. This refocus will also see the transitional changes to the Public Service Act 2008 completed and the transfer of the Public Service Commission chief executive's appeal function to the QIRC. This move will give the QIRC the ability to administer more effectively the aspects attached to its members when carrying out the Public Service appeals functions. In almost every case of arbitration, both parties have the intention to reach an amicable solution and return their focus to getting on with the job. This amendment allows for a smooth and effective administrative process to achieve just that. Once again, this bill will bring about a reduction in red tape and create a smaller and more efficient government entity.

This amendment bill supports the need to change the culture towards continuous training within the office environment. Whilst on active duty in the Marine Corps, a practice we employed on a regular basis—at a minimum, once per year—was that our unit would undertake induction programs that reinforced OH&S practices, ethics, equity and diversity and appropriate workplace behaviour. In my 20 years of military service and as a certified trainer and assessor, as well as a workplace health and safety officer, I not only was the recipient of this type of training but also conducted much of it. These programs are constructive tools that can be implemented in the workplace that, as mentioned, reinforce those key yet often forgotten strategies in ensuring a harmonious and productive work environment.

This legislative amendment is a cost-effective, pragmatic and appropriate measure to reducing red tape and is in line with the five-point action plan we took to the election whilst at the same time protecting services within the government sector. When as a government we are taking the steps to fix the appalling condition our state was left in by those members of the Labor Party to my far right, legislation like this will play a key role in getting our state back on track, restoring accountability in government. If we are intending on providing an operationally sound government—one that will achieve results, one that will not jeopardise the economic stability of the state but, on the contrary, drive it—we need legislation like the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 to achieve that important mission. I am proud to commend this bill to the House and be part of a government that is making the right decisions to support the industrial changes within the public sector.