




Speech by

Peter Wellington

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Hansard Tuesday, 27 November 2012

MOTION: PUBLIC SERVICE, JOBS

 **Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (6.12 pm): I rise to speak in support of the opposition's motion and against the government's amendment. It is very easy for government members to talk about cuts in the Public Service and Public Service staff reductions. Tonight in my contribution I want to reflect on the impact this decision has had on the crime-fighting Crime and Misconduct Commission in Queensland. It is easy for governments to blame others. The member for Condamine identified very clearly that this government has lost the plot with its vendetta to attend to staff reductions and staff sackings throughout the whole of the Public Service in Queensland. I am very concerned that the Premier and the Treasurer refuse to take responsibility for destroying confidence in Queensland. Everyone in Queensland has been affected by this government's decision—shop owners or mums and dads or people at home having dinner tonight. Quite frankly, by comparing the decisions that this government has made and the impact of this government's decisions on the Crime and Misconduct Commission and the various reports that have been tabled that are on the public record, I hope other members of the government will think about what I intend to say.

I refer members to the Crime and Misconduct Commission's annual report. I refer members to the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee report No. 86, the Attorney-General's response and more importantly the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Commission's report to the advisory panel which is currently investigating the Crime and Misconduct Act. In particular, I want to take members to two sections of that report, which is on the committee's website. Under the heading 'Proceeds of crime' the report states—

The CMC's Proceeds of Crime Unit provides a dual benefit to Queenslanders in that it disrupts illegal activity by removing associated financial benefits, and in the restraint and subsequent forfeiture of assets to the State. In 2011-12 the CMC restrained \$20.858m and forfeited \$7.007m in assets.

It goes on—

Given that the unit both disrupts criminal activity and increases state revenue, the Committee considers that this area of the CMC is of particular importance.

This unit is under-resourced at present and its significant workload means that focus is taken away from new matters and directed towards finalising matters already on foot. The queuing of new matters, as outlined in the CMC's Annual Report for 2011-12, provides time and opportunities for suspected criminals to dispose of money and other assets obtained through criminal activity.

I take members to another area headed 'CMC budget and staffing'. It states—

The Committee has particular concern regarding the current staffing issues within the CMC.

...

The total number of staff to leave the CMC between 1 July 2012 and 23 November 2012 will be 57. The Committee is concerned—

this is a bipartisan committee—

that such a reduction in staffing will inevitably affect the CMC's ability to perform its functions effectively.

The Committee notes a 1% budget reduction has contributed to the loss of a significant number of CMC staff. The Advisory Panel should consider the current funding of positions within the CMC carefully to ensure that the CMC has sufficient resources to fulfil its functions effectively.

What was the Attorney-General's response to these committee recommendations? I want to share it with members. The committee's recommendation in relation to combating major crime states—

The Committee recommends that the Government consider the allocation of additional resources to the CMC's forensic computing unit in order to better support investigations of paedophilia and child exploitation material.

The Attorney-General's response was, 'Not supported. Take a submission to the Cabinet Budget Review Committee.' Another committee recommendation states—

The Committee recommends that as a priority the Government allocate greater resources to the CMC's proceeds of crime function in order to assist the CMC in retaining existing staff and attracting new staff while also meeting the demand for new civil confiscation actions.

The Attorney-General's response? 'Not supported. Take the matter to the Cabinet Budget Review Committee.' This morning I asked a question of the Premier about his interest and concern about some of the submissions that the PCMC has made, and what did he say? Effectively he said, 'I'm not interested.' Queenslanders should be interested. Queenslanders should be concerned, because today we also saw this government remove the most experienced member in parliament, the member for Gaven, who has been a chairman of the PCMC for some time and who has more knowledge than anyone else on that committee. We have to ask the question: what is the Premier and the government's agenda? Why should they and why would they want to remove such an important person from such an important committee, today of all days?