




Speech by

Tim Mulherin

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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PUBLIC SERVICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.55 pm): I rise to oppose the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. These amendments are the second stage of changes to the administration of Public Service appeals. The first stage of the changes were introduced as part of the Industrial Relations (Fair Work Act Harmonisation) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, which was passed on 6 June 2012. Those changes were wrong then and they are wrong now. The initial changes included instructions that the supposedly independent Queensland Industrial Relations Commission would have to take direction from the government about the economic situation when determining wage decisions. The initial changes also allowed for ministerial intervention in industrial disputes.

This bill, which is a continuation of the initial changes, is essentially about streamlining the LNP process of sacking government workers. The explanatory notes of the bill state.

... the Government is refocusing the Public Service Commission away from a regulatory function towards a public sector efficiency agenda.

In other words, this bill is making it easy for the LNP government to line up government workers, count them and then fire them. The changes in this bill are not surprising, as we know how ruthless this LNP government has been when dealing with its own employees. We heard the Premier and his government flip-flop about the number of government workers they are sacking—it was going to be 20,000 and now they are not so sure. What they fail to realise is that every one of these jobs is not a statistic, but a person's life. The lack of dignity, humility and grace with which this government treats its own workers is astounding. The LNP government does not have the grace to let thousands of public servants, who are in a holding pattern, know about the future of their jobs. We hear today that this government is making its own workers sick with stress because of the treatment they are receiving from the LNP.

It is long past the time that the LNP started to give answers about the job cuts that the Premier arrogantly refuses to provide. Any number of job losses in regional communities has widespread ramifications across the area, but uncertainty about job losses makes it even worse. We know jobs are going in QBuild, Main Roads, Transport, Primary Industries, Health and Education, but the Newman government will not be upfront with the people of Queensland and tell them how many jobs will go and what areas will be affected.

The Newman government needs to acknowledge how local job cuts will affect regional communities. Job losses in regional communities have huge impacts on regional service delivery and local communities. Every job cut means one fewer pay packet being spent at local shops and on local services. Job losses also mean that families will have to move away from regional towns, taking their children away from local schools, which, in turn, could lose teachers as the population shrinks.

According to research conducted by the Queensland Council of Unions, working off ABS figures on statistical regional populations, regional areas may lose millions of dollars annually if 20,000 public sector jobs are cut. The estimations are that in Wide Bay-Burnett, that would be \$97 million a year out of the local economy; on the Gold Coast, \$170 million a year out of the local economy; on the Darling Downs,

\$78 million a year out of the local economy; on the Sunshine Coast, \$108 million a year out of the local economy; and in Far North Queensland, \$90 million a year out of the local economy.

The Newman government needs to end this waiting game and be honest with the people of regional Queensland about the many jobs he is axing. My other concern with this bill is that the LNP government has again allowed very little time for public scrutiny of the legislation. This is a reoccurring pattern with this secretive LNP government with a number of pieces of legislation suffering from the same lack of consultation. The lack of consultation on the bill has resulted in misunderstanding by stakeholders of the intention of some aspects of the proposed amendments. Again today we witness this secretive approach to legislation. The Attorney-General is introducing amendments to the bill which will enshrine in legislation the removal of employment security and outsourcing arrangement provisions in the enterprise agreements. This approach is about circumventing the legal challenge in the Supreme Court against the Public Service Commissioner's directive of 31 July which strikes out the employment security and outsourcing provisions in enterprise agreements.

What we have seen here is a government that is arrogant, that is drunk with its power and is just rolling over everyone. This is impacting on their standings in the poll. If one looks at the ReachTEL poll today one can see that the people in those electorates are very disappointed with this government which has been in power for a very short time.