




Speech By  
**Michael Crandon**

**MEMBER FOR COOMERA**

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Record of Proceedings, 12 November 2015

**QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL**

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (5.27 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a very brief contribution to the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2015 and, more to the point, to speak a little bit to Report No. 15 of the Finance and Administration Committee as the deputy chair. I acknowledge the comments that have been made by the chair of the committee. We certainly worked in a bipartisan way in relation to reviewing this particular bill and asking questions. At the outset I need to thank all of the members of the committee for the very robust, but positive, discussion that we had at times to bring this report to the House with a unanimous recommendation. Of course the secretariat have been working very hard. As I mentioned, this is Report No. 15 and I think we have got to about Report No. 17, so it has been a very full calendar for the committee and certainly for the secretariat, particularly with the four-year-term inquiry as well that we have just tabled the report on.

I acknowledge all of the people who took time to come to committee hearings and make submissions to us. I also acknowledge the constant support we received from the department. They were able to, sometimes in very short time frames, provide us with the answers we needed in relation to various aspects of the inquiry. Various members of the public, various organisations and so on raised issues, and we were able to get answers from the department very quickly, which was very good. We had general support. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has already mentioned, we are not opposing the bill. I note that some amendments will be moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Some concerns were raised. I recall asking: is this a toothless tiger? Is the Productivity Commission just a name and is it able to do anything about things that might come forward? Certainly, the commission that looked at things previously seemed to be a toothless tiger.

The committee looked closely at some of the issues raised before us. One in particular—interestingly, it has been mentioned by both the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the committee chair—is the issue of competitive neutrality. It is a big issue that is alive and has been going since 2011. I refer to the Waste Recycling Industry Association complaint to the Queensland Competition Authority in relation to the Sunshine Coast Regional Council. The QCA inquiry took some 12 months—it was very extensive—and found that the Sunshine Coast Regional Council's waste and resources management business does have a competitive advantage over potential competitors. That is where the question arises as to whether or not 'toothless tiger' is the right term. Although the council was given some opportunity to make decisions that may restore competitive neutrality, it went behind closed doors and made some decisions, but those decisions were to do nothing and leave things as they were. It is now 4½ years down the track. Even though pathways were recommended by the Queensland Competition Authority, the council chose to do nothing about the situation and there was nothing the Queensland Competition Authority could do about that.

There were two particular things noted by stakeholders in relation to part 5 of the bill. One was the ability of the industry association to make competitive neutrality complaints. The other related to the enforcement of recommendations where the commission finds there has been a breach of competitive

neutrality. In short, the committee investigated the issues. Although it is indeed the case, we are satisfied now, having made the inquiry of the department, that the department is working to address those concerns. We look forward to those concerns being properly addressed going forward and to perhaps some resolution for those waste management businesses on the Sunshine Coast.

In relation to competitive neutrality, in its report on the matter the QCA agreed that it did have jurisdiction. Whereas the Waste Recycling Industry Association indicated that the QCA at that point had no jurisdiction to investigate something if an association made a complaint, it was determined—and the QCA agreed—that it did in fact have jurisdiction to investigate complaints from an industry association. So something positive has come out of this whole affair for that association and for other industry associations. Now there is capacity for it to investigate on behalf of a whole industry, as opposed to expecting one particular business in an industry to come forward. Sometimes coming forward comes with great potential cost to the business, both in financial terms and in terms of the risk of being singled out perhaps by the local authority. The committee noted the department's advice that a precedent has now been set. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has well and truly canvassed the issues covered in the report and the bill. I also note the comments made by the committee chair in relation to it. I will go no further on that topic.

I have taken the opportunity to read through the amendments to clause 23 proposed to be moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I will not speak to the amendments now, but I have had an opportunity to look through them. To be honest, I do not know why we did not consider canvassing those particular issues during our committee hearings. Perhaps in the future when we are looking at this type of bill we should look at giving consideration to things that will be canvassed by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition at a later time.