




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 30 August 2016

**PUBLIC SAFETY BUSINESS AGENCY AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (4.10 pm): I rise today to make a contribution to the Public Safety Business Agency and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. I start by acknowledging you and your role as chair, Deputy Speaker. Your committee certainly spoke to the right people in making these recommendations as part of the report. I congratulate you on the work that yourself, your committee and your secretariat have done. I say that as someone who has worked in emergency services in QAS for a significant period of time and closely with Fire, EMQ, police staff and having forged relationships over that period of time. The Keelty review recommendations affected a lot of people on the front-line. I will come to the PSBA, but in the Ambulance Service alone the effects were enormous as we lost a lot of staff under the former Newman government, particularly front-office staff, those people who connected the stations to the people who dropped in for first aid courses and things like that. All those recommendation that were made actually resulted in jobs lost in the agency that I was connected with. I know the effects of the Keelty review well because I was able to give some feedback at the time, also working then with the department of community services and with the helicopter service in Townsville which is now Queensland Government Air.

Not all of the Keelty recommendations were bad. I acknowledge putting Ambulance under Health was a good thing. With the interactions between those organisations that was the right direction, but when you lose jobs it affects the agency. PSBA was a basket case. A corporate management group was created and made organisationally responsible for police, fire and emergency services. Out went EMQ, there were restructures and people were seconded to PSBA. It was heavily burdened with things such as procurement administration and media—things that were not required. We wonder why we needed to have a review to get it right. Again I congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker, on your work in that space.

During the review workers who were seconded to PSBA were consulted. They found concerns within the organisational role and function of the PSBA. This bill will reform the public safety portfolio and ensure that it is managed as effectively as possible and that those seconded to PSBA can go back to their operational agencies where they belong. With this bill passing we will ensure that the PSBA continues to operate but with a more clearly defined role, more targeted scope and clearer governance arrangements.

The Palaszczuk government acknowledges the outstanding work that emergency services workers perform daily across our broad Queensland communities. This is no better exemplified than in those particular and challenging times of natural disasters. Our government is prepared to introduce the measures that are necessary to ensure that these workers can continue to provide services to a world-class standard. I note that when you consulted, Mr Deputy Speaker, you spoke to the right people. Earlier we heard from the member for Coomera. It was terrible that you consulted with those nasty unions! You actually spoke to the workers' representatives from the United Firefighters Union and the

Queensland Police Union. Why would a responsible government not want to talk to the workers, their advocates and their representatives? I congratulate you on talking to the unions that many of the members pay into. That is part of their role.

This bill will reconfigure the structure of the Public Safety Business Agency through establishing the PSBA board of management. The board will provide leadership and strategic oversight to the PSBA and will consist of the QPS commissioner, the QFES commissioner and an independent external member appointed by the minister. The benefit of the amendment is clear: the heads of the operational agencies will have a stake in support services that will be provided to them by the PSBA. They will have a clear voice in the decisions that will affect them. Additionally, the fire and police commissioner are perfectly positioned to have visibility of the issues that affect the public safety portfolio and can work cooperatively as members of the board to resolve them.

Additionally, this bill will amend the functions of the PSBA itself to ensure that this agency can remain focused on its primary task of providing corporate services—not organisational management, corporate services. We have great organisations out there. Sometimes government just needs to get out of the way and let them get on with their daily jobs and provide that corporate function in the background to those operational agencies. I endorse the renewed commitment that the PSBA is making to support its partner agencies. I am advised that other administrative measures have already been undertaken to achieve the government's reforms of the public safety portfolio. This includes the interim PSBA board of management that has been working with implementation teams, with the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and the PSBA to ensure that this transition occurs as smoothly as possible. These measures include the return of many services and functions previously undertaken by the PSBA back to their respective operational and organisational agencies.

I am confident that these measures, in concert with this bill and the recommendations, will result in a more streamlined, efficient and effective emergency services. I have no hesitation in commending this bill to the House.