




Speech By
Shane King

MEMBER FOR KALLANGUR

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**CONSTITUTION OF QUEENSLAND AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL**

 **Mr KING** (Kallangur—ALP) (5.09 pm): I rise to make a contribution to this debate on the Constitution of Queensland and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. This bill proposes to statutorily recognise the core matters of the parliamentary committee system in the Constitution of Queensland 2001 and amend the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 to provide the parliament's portfolio committees with the power to initiate inquiries within their area of responsibility on their own motion.

Earlier this year at a vote taken during the council elections, Queenslanders voted in favour of giving the state Legislative Assembly fixed four-year terms. With these four-year terms now a reality we need to entrench our committee system so that Queenslanders can feel comfort that our work in this place is given the proper scrutiny it so appropriately deserves. The Fitzgerald inquiry in the late eighties identified the need to introduce a committee system in Queensland to comprehensively review legislation and the administration of government departments and associated public bodies. Fitzgerald considered that governments need analysis to make sure that checks and balances are adhered to. I guess, after the government that brought about the reason for that inquiry, this is fairly evident.

Since the introduction of the parliamentary committee system there has been a constant development in the way committees operate and since the reforms in 2011 the majority of bills have been subject to parliamentary committee inquiry. The previous LNP government sent a few contentious bills through without using the committee system and Queenslanders were not happy with the results of this, which was shown at the ballot box in January last year. After today, that should never happen again.

Under this bill, core matters of the parliamentary committee system will now be included in the Constitution. At the start of a term of the Legislative Assembly the Assembly will establish a minimum of six portfolio committees that will cover all areas of government activity. Every bill introduced into the Legislative Assembly must be referred to one of the portfolio committees or another committee for a review period of a minimum of six weeks from the date of referral. However, if there is a need to declare a bill urgent and refer a bill to a committee for a review period of less than six weeks, the Legislative Assembly may, under its standing rules and orders, by ordinary majority decide to do this or even discharge a bill from a committee or decide a bill not be referred. The annual appropriation bills must always be referred to committees for examination in a public hearing—that is, our estimates process.

This, as we all know, is how the portfolio committees and the parliament's legislative process is operating in the current parliament under the Palaszczuk government. However, placing these matters in the Constitution highlights their importance now and into the future and will hold this and future governments to account.

Another amendment this bill delivers is to provide an ability for portfolio committees to initiate inquiries on matters within their portfolio areas at their discretion if the majority of the committee desires to do so. I think this strengthens the committee system and as long it does not impede upon the core work of the committee it will provide avenues for greater parliamentary scrutiny.

Finally, this bill seeks to make changes so that future amendments to the Constitution would require an absolute majority of the Legislative Assembly to vote in the affirmative to allow them to be passed. I will not harp on and repeat what has been said before. I will end my contribution there. I think this bill helps to achieve what the Fitzgerald inquiry set out to reform in this state—and it did need reform—and I commend the bill to the House.