




Speech By
Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

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

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (2.50 pm): I rise to speak to the Public Safety Business Agency and Other Legislation Amendment Bill on behalf of the LNP opposition and lead the debate on the review of this agency. The matters contained in this bill are primarily about the machinery of government and the organisational structures within the government. While they have an immediate impact on workers within agencies within the Public Service, there is a significant impact on front-line services and how Queenslanders are protected from harm, whether it be crime or natural disasters or other similar emergencies.

By way of background, the former LNP government commissioned a review of police and community safety led by respected former Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty. In his 335-page review Mr Keelty said—

It became clear as our review continued that what is known as the police and emergency services portfolio of agencies is not operating efficiently and has some endemic challenges particularly in the areas of information and communication technology and human resources, as well as demand management and service delivery.

Mr Keelty added—

We found that, despite the obvious successes of recent years, the portfolio has been limited in its effectiveness by inefficient operating systems where salaries and rosters are sometimes managed in manual systems, cost attribution is not easily available and true measures of performance are elusive.

Within the broader portfolio of Police and Community Safety the review team has found:

- a culture of 'entitlement' amongst portfolio agencies has prospered giving unions covering the workforces of the portfolio an unsustainable and sometimes unrealistic outlook (e.g. the sustainability of specialist allowances for activities that once were specialist but today are basic qualifications);
- agencies have advanced their own positions without linking with other portfolio agencies performing similar roles (e.g. intelligent traffic analysis system, iROAM and Queensland Fire and Rescue Service's Rapid Damage Assessments);
- there have been missed opportunities to capitalise on economies of scale across the portfolio;
- the Department of Community Safety and the Queensland Police Service do not take a role in the cross portfolio executive development of staff leading to many at executive level having limited experience which is inimical to developing a strong, diverse, innovative and experienced executive team that can identify opportunities and drive change; and
- the Department of Community Safety and the Queensland Police Service have either not addressed or have been unable to advance better models for interoperability and coordination of funding and accountability for preparedness for disaster between the Department of Community Safety, local governments and volunteers.

The Keelty review made 127 recommendations, including: merging QFRS with EMQ to form Queensland Fire and Emergency Services; establishing the Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management tasked with reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of disaster management in Queensland; and creating the PSBA tasked with providing the corporate and business services for the

public safety portfolio. These were important reforms that needed to be pursued to ensure that our emergency response agencies were focused on delivering for Queenslanders in the most efficient and effective way possible.

The Public Safety Business Agency was formally established in May 2014 with the task of: holding all infrastructure, fleet and information and communication technology assets and managing human resourcing, financial management, legal, policy, media and strategic planning functions for the QPS, QFES and the IGEM; and performing additional functions, including the operation and management of declared public safety entities.

In 2015 the current Labor government undertook a review of the PSBA which was conducted by the Public Service Commission—another review by this do-nothing government, but we understand some of the concerns that have been raised by key stakeholders. While finding that the PSBA has achieved some successes and that the model does create many potential opportunities, the PSBA review concluded that stakeholders primarily identified concerns and frustrations with existing arrangements. It stated—

Fundamentally, it was found that the majority of the identified problems are caused by confusion over the scope, purpose and function of the PSBA. This theme holds true for employees in the partner agencies and the PSBA.

While the overall function of the PSBA, which was established by the LNP, is being retained, we understand that there have been some teething problems since it was first established in 2014. For Queensland's emergency response agencies to work as efficiently as possible and keep Queenslanders safe from harm, it is important that the employees have confidence in the structure of each organisation including Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, the Queensland Police Service, the Inspector-General Emergency Management and the Public Safety Business Agency.

We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the new structure and ensure that it has the best model and leadership to protect property, rescue Queenslanders from harm and manage weather and other emergencies as efficiently and effectively as possible. In that respect, we will not oppose those elements of the bill that deal with the Public Service Commission's review of the Public Safety Business Agency.

There are elements of the bill that we do not support and in fact will oppose. The bill includes amendments that finalise the machinery-of-government changes that will allow blue card services to transition to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. That is in direct contrast to the recommendations of the Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. Recommendation 12.17 of the report states—

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services progress and evaluate red-tape reduction reforms, including:

- transferring employment screening to the Queensland Police Service and streamlining it further;
- considering ceasing the licensing of care services; and
- streamlining the carer certification process including a review of the legislative basis for determining that carers and care service personnel do not pose a risk to children.

The commission of inquiry report notes—

Under the government's six-month action plan, the Children's Commission is streamlining the current application process. Other jurisdictions have achieved considerable reduction in costs and approvals through automated online services. The Queensland Police Service conducts criminal history screening for the public service and so has ready access to the information required. The administration of an efficient, rationalised service that builds on the child offender legislation should be established, taking into account additional information required for child protection services.

The revised system should be based on a balanced view of risk and downstream effects on community participation, with the intent being to screen out adults that have a relevant criminal or disciplinary history.

We are not convinced that the important reforms that form the basis of recommendations in the Child Protection Commission of Inquiry in 2013 should be undone and we will not be supporting these changes. We have already seen the effects of the government's stewardship of the child protection system. A recent poll showed that 30 per cent of Queenslanders thought the system was in crisis and a further 50 per cent said it was under pressure. Under Labor and Minister Shannon Fentiman our child protection system is quickly slipping back to the dark old days under Peter Beattie and Anna Bligh and we will not support any changes that are in direct contrast to recommendations of the Child Protection Commission of Inquiry.

I want to thank the members of the parliamentary committee who considered this bill and acknowledge the work of our hardworking police, fire and emergency services workers, including the thousands of volunteers in the SES and Rural Fire Brigade. We note the consultation outlined in the explanatory notes, including within government agencies and with relevant unions and employee associations. As I outlined earlier, we will not be opposing the organisational structure changes of the PSBA but will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the organisation over time.