




Speech By  
**Trevor Watts**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

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

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (3.58 pm): I would like to speak briefly to the Public Safety Business Agency and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I note that the committee in its report recommended that the bill be passed.

I would like to give a bit of background to the bill. I think we can all agree in this House that the police, emergency services and the fire service do a wonderful job in providing services to keep the community safe and in giving people reassurance not only when disasters occur but also on other occasions. Having those services managed properly and running efficiently and effectively is very important for all of us.

In 2013 Mick Keelty wrote a report titled *Sustaining the unsustainable* in which he made 127 recommendations, including merging the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service with Emergency Services Queensland to form Queensland Fire and Emergency Services; establishing the Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management, which was tasked with reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of disaster management in Queensland; and creating the PSBA, which was tasked with providing the corporate and business services for public safety.

The PSBA was formally established in May 2014. Its key task was to try to keep people on the front line and take some of the corporate services under its wing. It was to hold infrastructure, fleet and information and communication technology assets and manage the human resourcing, financial management, legal policy, media and strategic planning functions for the QPS, the QFES and the IGEM. It was a good concept, but I think everybody would agree—and as the report has recommended—it needed a review. That is not to say that the PSBA was not performing some very good functions and taking some stress and pressure away from front-line staff so that those people could do the main core of their job whilst leaving some of corporate functions to be done by others who have specialist skills in those areas.

The review of the PSBA found that, although the PSBA had achieved some successes and that the model creates potential opportunities, stakeholders primarily identified concerns and frustrations with some of the existing arrangements. Any sensible parliament needs to look at those recommendations, take them on board and come up with solutions. As I said, I think we are all looking for well-run, efficient and effective emergency services and the provision of safety for our communities.

We have arrived at a wait-and-see and watch position—to continue to monitor the effectiveness of any structural changes and ensure that the PSBA has the best model and leadership to protect property, rescue Queenslanders from harm and manage weather events and other emergencies as efficiently and effectively as possible as they arise. We all agree in this House that those are good endeavours. The government has made some changes to the structure of the PSBA. It has the ability to do that. We will see how those changes work. That is not to say that we will not be back in this place

one day reviewing the PSBA and trying to work out where best to draw the line between the corporate functions that are required for our emergency services and others to do their jobs well and providing front-line services.

I will conclude my comments by saying that in no way am I reflecting on the wonderful job that emergency services do for us in Queensland. We can all be rightly proud of our police, fire and emergency services and anybody else who is involved in disaster management. As members would be aware, in 2011 a big flood came through Toowoomba. Who would have thought that it was possible to have a flood on top of a mountain where people live, but it happened and there were some tragic consequences. Out of that disaster were some lessons for us in emergency planning. All of the emergency services in Toowoomba have taken those on board. They have worked very hard to make sure that, if such a disaster were to happen again, not only have the infrastructure changes that were required been made but also the management practice changes that were required have been made to make sure that the same tragic circumstances do not arise again. From an emergency services and disaster management point of view, the range always has the potential to have a ferocious bushfire come up the escarpment. I know that many people involved in emergency services in Toowoomba and the council are involved in making sure that, if that occurs, there is a good plan to keep the community safe.