




Speech By
Hon. Bill Byrne

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 30 August 2016

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

Second Reading

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (2.43 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I thank the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee for its examination of the Public Safety Business Agency and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. I note the committee tabled its report on the bill on 2 August 2016 and recommended that the bill be passed. I also thank those who made submissions to the committee and participated in public briefings. Their views and insight into the management of the public safety portfolio help ensure that we have the best governance arrangements in place in this important public safety portfolio.

This bill is one of the final steps in the Palaszczuk government's reform of the public safety portfolio and is a clear demonstration of the government's ability to respond to the needs of the community and achieve the best outcome for all Queenslanders. This bill responds to concerns raised by front-line officers, police, fire and emergency services officers, unions and other associations about the creation and subsequent performance of the Public Safety Business Agency, which was established by the former Liberal National Party government. The Palaszczuk government made an election commitment to review the Public Safety Business Agency and we delivered on that commitment. The review outlined the challenges and frustrations that staff within the agency experienced under the previous government. It found that the Public Safety Business Agency suffered from a lack of purpose and direction, and insufficient integration with the core business of the other agencies in the public safety portfolio. This bill is about revitalising and restoring public safety support services and, importantly, returning those services to their rightful place with the Queensland Police Service and the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. They can now effectively get on with the business of keeping Queenslanders safe.

As we well know, the Public Safety Business Agency was established by the previous government as a result of the Police and Community Safety Review undertaken by Mick Keelty in 2012-13. The Public Safety Business Agency was established in November 2013 and was formalised by the commencement of the Public Safety Business Agency Act 2014 in May of 2014. The Palaszczuk government made a commitment to review the agency and we met that commitment by tasking the Public Service Commission to conduct the review. The review heard from front-line workers in the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and the agency itself, as well as major unions, associations and stakeholders. The review found that, while there had been modest successes, and that is acknowledged, confusion and frustration were endemic with arrangements that

the Public Safety Business Agency had formed with operational agencies. The review culminated in a number of recommendations designed to return the responsibility of all operational and associated services from the Public Safety Business Agency to the respective commissioners of the Queensland Police Service and the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services.

Again, the Palaszczuk government listened, evaluated and acted by endorsing key recommendations of that review. Many of those recommendations could be implemented through the normal machinery-of-government changes and the process of transitioning services from the PSBA to operational agencies is well underway. On 1 July this year, core services and functions previously undertaken by the Public Safety Business Agency will be back where they belong, with the Police Service and Fire and Emergency Services. Hundreds of police and firefighters will be returned to their departments.

Throughout this process, we remained committed to the employment security policy, so that our emergency services personnel and support staff could rest assured that there would be stability in their workplace during the transition arrangements. This transition occurred under the control and approval of an interim board of management. The interim board of management consists of the Police Commissioner, the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner and an independent member of the board, Mr Geoffrey Waite, from Queensland Treasury. The interim board has provided high-level governance to the Public Safety Business Agency and has worked with the implementation teams within each of those operational agencies to allow the transition to occur as smoothly as possible.

Some of the recommendations of the review were unable to take effect without legislative intervention. This bill makes those amendments, so that our government's reform agenda can be completed. The bill will amend the functions of the Public Safety Business Agency, formally establish the board of management, allow the responsibilities of blue card services to transfer to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, and integrate the State Government Protective Security Service into the Queensland Police Service.

At this point, I want to reinforce that the reforms to the public safety portfolio are not an adverse reflection on any of our emergency service workers. Queenslanders are fortunate to have such a dedicated staff in the public safety portfolio, who every day demonstrate their professionalism and commitment to keeping communities safe, often in the most difficult of circumstances. These reforms should be seen as a correction to the flaws inherent within the Public Safety Business Agency model implemented by the previous government. The bill is one part of a process we are undertaking to remedy those flaws.

This bill will help ensure that our public safety portfolio is equipped with the most optimal organisational structures and working arrangements so that the appropriate support can be provided to our emergency services personnel as they perform their vital roles in the community. I commend the bill to the House.