




Speech By
Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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PUBLIC SERVICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (3.07 pm): I rise to support the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the important reforms contained in the bill. As we know, these reforms represent stage 1 of giving effect to the recommendations arising from the independent review of public sector employment laws by Peter Bridgman. The stage 1 reforms contained in the bill will be complemented by stage 2 of the public sector reforms to come, which will implement the remaining Bridgman review recommendations, including a new public service act and code of conduct.

At its core this bill is about maximising employment security and promoting permanency as the default basis of employment for the public sector. Permanency in the Public Service is a fundamental principle of Westminster government, particularly as it relates to the provision of frank and fearless advice to government. Our government values that frank and fearless advice just as we value the Public Service, from our frontline emergency service workers, police, paramedics and fireys who keep us safe at those most vulnerable times when Queenslanders need them most to our extraordinary health workers in frontline and supporting roles; our teachers and teacher aides—and I wish them a happy Teacher Aide Day for last week—and all education staff; our public transport planners, drivers and engineers; and our courts and corrective services workers who, along with the police, uphold justice in this state.

To all those public servants who work across the length and breadth of Queensland to deliver the services Queenslanders depend on, I say thank you. I acknowledge your service and contribution. Our government says thank you and acknowledges your contribution particularly during times of trial, such as the bushfires and floods that Queensland has experienced in successive years and now in 2020 in the face of a sustained global pandemic. Unlike those opposite, we know that you cannot cut and sack public servants, including from the front line, without all Queenslanders suffering. You cannot reduce the number of nurses and doctors in our hospitals, child safety workers in our community or the number of teachers in our schools without all Queenslanders suffering.

Mr Power: But they did. They sacked them.

Ms LINARD: They did indeed. Whether at a federal or state level, LNP governments do not discriminate. In fact, they are nothing if not consistent in their approach to the expendable nature of the Public Service, but that is not our approach. Where they cut, we invest; where they sack, we increase frontline workers; and where they sell, we maintain and value in public ownership great state assets and services that are so core to public service delivery in this state.

We want to ensure that Queensland has the most responsive, consistent and reliable Public Service possible. Restoring fairness in public sector employment has been a key commitment and priority of our government since we were elected in 2015. The bill before us today continues that important work and complements the recommendations of the Coaldrake review by progressing priorities in two main areas: firstly, giving full effect to the commitment to maximise employment security in public sector employment; and, secondly, providing for positive performance management of public sector employees.

The bill amends the language in the Public Service Act 2008 to state that permanent employment is the default basis for employment in the public sector and that other non-permanent forms of employment should only be used when ongoing employment is not viable or appropriate. The bill preserves the current requirement, based in directive, to review the status of employment for casual and temporary employees after two years of continuous service but, importantly, introduces a right for public servants employed on a temporary or casual basis to request a review of their employment status at 12 months. This is only fair. Employees should be provided with regular reviews and clear communication regarding the ongoing nature of their roles.

The bill will also introduce positive performance management principles to promote regular and constructive communication and to ensure that good work is recognised. As a former manager in the private sector and someone who holds a HR degree, I cannot emphasise enough how important it is that employees receive early feedback, constructive feedback and continuous feedback. It builds cohesion in the workplace, it lifts productivity and it drives development in the workplace. In this vein, the bill also clearly delineates performance management and development from disciplinary and corrective action. They are not the same thing. While the former can very often be seen to reduce the need for the latter, they are at vastly different ends of a performance continuum.

The committee made two recommendations: that the bill be passed and that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet investigates an appropriate mechanism to provide fairness and transparency of the decision-making process to a person where the chief executive does not make a conversion decision within 28 days, pursuant to proposed new sections 149A and 149C of the Public Service Act 2008.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the deputy chair and members of my committee for their contributions during the inquiry hearings. I also thank all submitters to the inquiry and our hardworking secretariat, Erin and Annemarie.

We want the Queensland Public Service to be an employer of choice and a leader in public administration. As our Premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk, said when introducing this bill to the House, we want the Queensland Public Service to be empowered to be fair and responsive in order to deliver for all Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.