




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2021

DEBT REDUCTION AND SAVINGS BILL

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (5.53 pm): I rise to support the proposed Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021. This bill implements a range of savings and debt reduction measures that include identified public sector efficiencies and modernisation measures necessary to ensure the economic health of our state into the future. A number of these measures will be relevant to the Queenslanders I am responsible for under my ministerial portfolio. For example, one of the elements in the proposed bill is to move from traditional print advertising and publishing to online advertising and publishing.

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 and the Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003 both include provisions relating to the publication of notices. My department has noted that online publication in rural and remote regions may not be readily accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I am pleased that the bill identifies a specific exemption provision to allow for print publication to continue to take place in regional communities. As such, the provisions in the cultural heritage acts will be covered by this exemption provision.

The Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021 provides for the transfer of Titles Registry functions to the new entity Registry Co. The Queensland Titles Registry provides an essential service to Queenslanders and the property and development sector, processing over 6,000 lodgements and over 2.3 million paid title services in 2020 alone. This service is important to my ministerial portfolio, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and traditional owners accessing the Titles Registry to support their engagement with native title and land rights systems.

Whilst Registry Co will deliver Titles Registry services going forward, the bill provides the state with the power to protect the registers and ensure the delivery of Titles Registry services under the new operating arrangements. The implementation of a fee unit model with the amendments to the Acts Interpretation Act 1954 will streamline the annual process of indexing regulatory fees and reducing administrative burden for agencies.

Saving considerable time, a fee unit model for regulatory fees will enable these fees to be indexed in the same manner as penalty units. Under the current fee structures, annual indexation requires agencies to amend hundreds of pages of regulation to reflect the new dollar value of their fees. The current process is resource intensive, taking up to three months for some agencies to implement these changes for hundreds of fees and charges. Additionally, this process takes more than 800 hours each year to prepare the necessary fee regulations by the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel.

Streamlining the annual process, the fee unit model will provide for indexation of the fee unit rather than the amendment of hundreds of pages of regulation. Removing administrative inefficiencies for all agencies and OPQC will realise substantial financial savings across government, as hundreds of hours of staff time and effort can be fully redirected to focus on service delivery.

I also note that the integration of the Queensland Productivity Commission into Queensland Treasury will not impact the commission's inquiry into the National Disability Insurance Scheme market in Queensland. The Queensland Productivity Commission provided its final report to the Treasurer on 30 April 2021, and a Queensland government response will be provided within the six-month time line.

Additionally, I note that the bill reintegrates the Public Safety Business Agency, or PSBA, with the Queensland Police Service, or QPS, and the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, or QFES. As the former minister for fire and emergency services, I know that there are several staff in specific roles who will be very pleased with this reintegration.

When I was the QFES minister, I had a number of delegations come and see me—mainly the mechanics. They were highly skilled mechanics who work on the full fleet of QFES appliances—pumpers, tankers, airline appliances. They have very specialist roles. Because they were employed as mechanics working for the PSBA, they could not easily explain to people at the pub what they did for a living. When they said, 'I'm a mechanic for the PSBA,' people would not know what that was. They always saw themselves as mechanics for the fire service, and they feel very proud of that. I want to mention Rohan Webb from the AMWU and his delegates who came and saw me a couple of times in response to being able to get the mechanics back into QFES from the PSBA.

We can speculate all we like about why the PSBA was set up. It was an experiment that certainly failed. Perhaps it was set up to sell. We do not know. We are not really sure. But it did not work and we need to get those people back—

Mr Nicholls: If you had read Mick Keelty's report, you would know the reason why. It was pretty clear.

Mr CRAWFORD: I take the interjection from the former treasurer, the member for Clayfield.

Mr Nicholls: Did you read Mick Keelty's report?

Mr CRAWFORD: I did read Mick Keelty's report.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Member for Clayfield, cease all interjections.

Mr CRAWFORD: As I said, the experiment failed. It did not work. Perhaps the former treasurer was planning on selling it off to the highest bidder. I am not sure, but that is not the strategy of this government. We will now bring those people back to the departments where they belong. They belong in the emergency services; that is where they have always been. That is where they are going to come back to. They are going to come back to the police, back to the ambulance and back to the fire. They will wear those badges with honour. Their pay sheets will once again say they are an employee of that respective emergency service.

I want to take this opportunity to highlight the good work that my department is undertaking to ensure that savings targets will be achieved without affecting any frontline service delivery for some of the most vulnerable Queenslanders, particularly our seniors, our people with disability and our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I support the bill.