



Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY**

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**INTEGRITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**PUBLIC SECTOR BILL**

 **Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (4.26 pm): I rise to contribute to the Public Sector Bill 2022 and the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill in this cognate debate. Before I start my contribution, I would like to thank the opposition leader for his generous praise regarding my time as a public servant. I know it is a bit of an Italian bromance and I would like to acknowledge my blood countryman, but that is where the comparison stops when it comes to how we saw the Public Service being treated. The Public Sector Bill 2022 has been drafted by the Palaszczuk government to ensure that the framework for the Public Service is meeting the standards of a contemporary public service and is a fair employer. This bill acknowledges and provides all public sector employees with a modern and simplified legislative framework and further the Queensland government's commitment to being fair, responsive and a leader in public administration.

In the Economics and Governance Committee report No. 37 the chair, the member for Logan, adequately sums up what this bill is about. He said—

The Public Sector Bill 2022 seeks to modernise the laws which govern our public sector workforce including clarifying how equity and diversity considerations may factor into recruitment and selection decision making. This Bill aims to not only maintain the primacy of merit selection, but also to ensure that conscious or unconscious bias in hiring or promotion decisions mean that some equally meritorious workers are not overlooked or not encouraged to apply.

Queensland has made enormous changes to work towards a diverse and representative public service, already almost 70% of public servants and 51% of leadership roles are women, and since 2019, almost 60% of Senior Executive Service appointments are women.

...

This bill continues to ensure that we have a public service based on merit appointments that is reflective of the diversity of our State.

That was a great summary of what this bill is about and I fully support the chair's statement.

The main policy objectives of the Public Sector Bill 2022 are to: modernise the public sector employment laws and rejuvenate the capability and capacity of the public sector workforce to respond to the Bridgman review and the Coaldrake report. After commissioning the Bridgman review in 2018, the Queensland government accepted all of the review's recommendations, in full or in principle, with a two-stage approach for implementation. Stage 1 public sector reforms were implemented through the passage of the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020 to ensure the immediate implementation of recommendations related to maximising the government's commitment to employment security and providing Public Service employees with access to positive performance management. Both these measurements were well supported.

The Public Sector Bill 2022 proposes to implement stage 2 public sector reforms by replacing the Public Service Act 2008 and giving effect to the Bridgman review's primary recommendation to provide all public sector employees with a plain language, modern, simplified and an employee focused legislative framework.

The bill incorporates amendments to implement the recommendations of the independent review of public sector culture and accountability by Professor Peter Coaldrake. With regard to the level of consultation undertaken by the government on this particular bill, the public sector joint advisory committee, comprised of public sector unions and senior central agency departmental officers, was consulted throughout the development of this bill, including in relation to the policy positions arising from the Coaldrake inquiry report.

The Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships also undertook targeted consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and peak representatives to ensure the bill acknowledges and strengthens the government's relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the public sector by requiring public sector entities to recognise the importance of the right to self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Further, the Economics and Governance Committee called for public submissions and held a public hearing to hear from submitters to the bill. Some submitters raised concerns—the member for Macalister raised this earlier—that neither the Bridgman nor the Coaldrake report introduced a fifth diversity target group for the LGBTIQ+ cohort of the Public Service. The committee acknowledges the discrimination and harassment experienced by members of the LGBTIQ+ community reported by submitters, including in the workplace, and understands that the diversity target groups in this bill were subject to significant consultation and consideration. The committee notes, however, that should evidence emerge of the need for an additional diversity target group, the bill provides that additional groups may be prescribed by regulation.

As a member of the Economics and Governance Committee and a former public servant prior to entering this place, I congratulate the Premier for the focused work in this bill, particularly around maximising employment security. The Bridgman review noted that job security is a crucial feature of the Westminster system of government. Staff who are secure in their roles are better placed to innovate and give full and frank advice to the government, thereby maintaining the integrity of the government.

In my own electorate of Hervey Bay, many public servants will be secure in the knowledge that the Palaszczuk government is driving forward reform and incrementally enhancing the effectiveness of the Public Service without taking the hammer-blow approach of those opposite. In growing regional cities like Hervey Bay, we know what that approach felt like, as those opposite gutted and ripped the heart out of the Public Service locally when they were last in power. Offices were shut, regional services were reduced or stopped, and good, decent hardworking public servants were sacked.

Let me tell you about one of those individuals: Jason. Jason was an AO2 who was at the time the only breadwinner in his family and the sole support for his disabled father. Jason waited in fear in those dark months after the 2012 election for the dead hand of Campbell Newman and those opposite to tap him on the shoulder. Unfortunately, the dreaded box man came to Jason when the bean counters on the other side loaded up their spreadsheets and looked at the dollars on the bottom line and started pressing the delete button on our regional jobs. There was no consideration of the service being taken from my region, nor the massive impact it would have on people's lives or on our community. That is why this Public Sector Bill is so important to public sector employees.

This bill will give certainty and reform, promote ethical public sector culture and develop highly skilled public servants. Unlike the LNP razor gang, most of whom still sit on their front bench, regional Queenslanders know you well. They remember you. They remember the members for Clayfield and Nanango, and they will never forgive them for the devastation wreaked on their regional Public Service. They remember how they discarded decent, committed, good, hardworking members of the Public Service but never apologised to them. Many who were sacked have never recovered from the LNP's treatment, from being cast onto the scrap heap by the opposition, not caring about the families they supported, the community they were leaders of or the commitment to the community they believed in. They tore our regional social fabric to shreds and they did not care less.

It was a little disappointing that the opposition in their dissenting report said nothing, because there was not one—I could not find it. Might it be that the LNP is a bit sensitive talking about the Public Service, given the Leader of the Opposition has already indicated what fate will befall them if the LNP returns to government in this state. 'The Public Service has nothing to fear,' they say. Funny, that! I remember a former LNP premier saying that before he was elected, and look what happened. Tell the future Jasons you will sack to believe you. I do not think they will.

I want to recognise the great work done by Queensland's public servants. The Palaszczuk government respects you and thanks you for your ongoing commitment to the values of the Public Service. You show commitment to make Queensland a better place. You do make a difference, and the Palaszczuk government and I acknowledge your dedicated service. These individuals show extraordinary commitment by working all hours, on weekends and on public holidays to ensure the wheels of government keep turning and they provide the services all Queenslanders need. I congratulate the committee for their work on the bill led by the chair, the member for Logan, and supported by the deputy chair, the member for Mermaid Beach, and the committee secretariat. While the Palaszczuk government plans and delivers for the future through good, future focused legislation like this bill, the only thing the LNP does is cut, sell and sack—and they will do it again. I support the bills before the House.