



Speech By  
**Dr Christian Rowan**


**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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Record of Proceedings, 29 November 2022

## **INTEGRITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

### **PUBLIC SECTOR BILL**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (5.46 pm): I rise to address the cognate debate on the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and the Public Sector Bill 2022. Integrity, accountability, openness and transparency are the foundations of democratic government. By its own actions and through various reviews, public revelations and damning reports, it is evident that the Palaszczuk state Labor government has abandoned these core democratic principles. The irony has not been lost that, in bringing to the Queensland parliament two separate bills pertaining separately to matters of public sector reform and enhanced statutory independence and authority, the state Labor government has chosen to debate these bills in cognate, thereby limiting the time for full and proper debate and scrutiny. That being said, I wish to firstly address the Public Sector Bill 2022.

Introduced by the Queensland Premier into the parliament on 14 October 2022, the Public Sector Bill will primarily repeal and replace the Public Service Act 2008. In so doing, as outlined by the Premier, this specific legislation seeks to give effect to the primary recommendation of the Bridgman review that all public sector employees are provided with a modern, simplified and employee focused legislative framework. The report of the independent review undertaken by Mr Peter Bridgman titled *A fair and responsive Public Service for all* was delivered to the Queensland Premier on 3 May 2019.

The following question must be asked: why has it taken the Palaszczuk state Labor government more than 3½ years to deliver stage 2 of the Bridgman review, including the review's primary recommendation? The answer is because Queenslanders know that the Palaszczuk state Labor government only acts when it is politically beneficial, not when it is in the best interests of good democratic government and not delivering for Queenslanders. We have seen throughout the terms of the Palaszczuk state Labor government that they only act when it is politically beneficial and not in the best interests of all Queenslanders and democratic government. That has occurred time and time again.

Whilst there are a number of important and overdue reforms for our Public Service within this legislation, once again the state Labor government brings to this parliament legislation that simply does not go far enough and which is yet another missed opportunity for genuine legislative reform. There is nothing within this bill that will fix the systemic cultural issues that have been allowed to deteriorate over the last seven years under the inept leadership of the Palaszczuk state Labor government. The 3½ years that it has taken to deliver stage 2 of the recommended public sector reform—

**Ms Grace:** Yes, stage 2.

**Dr ROWAN:**—shows such an unwillingness to act and to act promptly. That is why it has taken 3½ years. I take the interjection from the member for McConnel. It has taken 3½ years to get to stage 2. It rightly highlights a significant concern that the Palaszczuk state Labor government will take a similarly lethargic approach to implementing all of the important recommendations contained within the review of culture and accountability undertaken by Professor Peter Coaldrake AO.

This leads me to the second of the two cognate pieces of legislation, the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Again, introduced by the Queensland Premier on 14 October 2022, the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill ultimately seeks to amend legislation to specifically 'better promote the independence and authority of the Queensland Auditor-General, the Queensland Ombudsman and the Queensland Integrity Commissioner'. This specific legislation is to implement only some, not all, of the important recommendations that are contained within the following two reports— firstly, the report by Professor Peter Coaldrake AO titled *Let the sunshine in: review of culture and accountability in the Queensland public sector*; and, secondly, the strategic review of the Integrity Commissioner's functions, which was delivered by Mr Kevin Yearbury. I note that, as stated in the explanatory notes, a second bill will be required to implement the other recommendations.

Just as with the Public Sector Bill, again Labor has failed to fully implement genuine and meaningful reform. As the first test of the Palaszczuk state Labor government's supposed commitment to implementing all of the Coaldrake review recommendations 'lock, stock and barrel', Labor has already failed. Professor Peter Coaldrake recommended the removal of the power of the Treasurer to approve fees of the Queensland Audit Office. The fact that this legislation will give power to a parliamentary committee that can consider the state government's indexation rate, as well as advice received by the Treasurer, is indicative of the significant influence that the Treasurer may still wield over the fees set by the Queensland Audit Office. Not surprisingly, the Queensland Audit Office rightly has its concerns regarding this provision.

Accordingly, if the Labor state government will not deliver this recommendation as Professor Peter Coaldrake intended, then the Liberal National Party will. That is why the state LNP opposition has introduced its own amendment to ensure that the Queensland Audit Office can operate without the fear of any influence, perceived or otherwise, by the Treasurer of the day. I wish to take this opportunity to formally acknowledge the important work that was undertaken by Professor Peter Coaldrake and the substantive findings and recommendations that were made within his final report. In just the third paragraph on the first page of Professor Peter Coaldrake's final report, he stated—

This Review was prompted by a number of issues, some publicly ventilated, which together paint the picture of an integrity system under stress trying to keep check on a culture that, from the top down, is not meeting public expectations.

This paragraph illustrates what is ultimately at the heart of the current Labor state government's failure on integrity, accountability, openness and transparency. It is under the leadership of Premier Palaszczuk and various Labor ministers that the culture of integrity within our state Labor government has deteriorated so significantly. It is well known that the culture of any organisation is determined and guided by its most senior leadership. The breakdown of Queensland's system of integrity and accountability is not because of our public servants but because of the failure of leadership and the abandonment of basic Westminster system principles of accountability and responsibility by this current state Labor government. Since it first came to power almost eight years ago, the Palaszczuk state Labor government has been plagued by scandal, lurching from one integrity and accountability crisis to another.

**Ms Grace:** Which one?

**Dr ROWAN:** I will outline them again for the member for McConnell. Let us talk about the mangocube saga involving the Labor Minister for Transport and Main Roads. We remember that one. We know what was happening in relation to private emails and that was inappropriate. What about the dubious survey launched by the now Deputy Premier all to justify the removal of the Lady Cilento name from the Queensland Children's Hospital? Do we remember that dubious process with the then minister for health?

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Dr ROWAN:** I do not mind the member for McConnell, but it is almost like as part of this debate the Minister for Education has a case of trypanosomiasis. When we think about what is going on in this debate, her contributions are both puerile and facile when it comes to her constant interjections. These are serious matters that the people of Queensland want to talk about in relation to integrity and accountability. The Minister for Education in her portfolio has also failed when it comes to integrity and accountability, and I will get to that in a moment. Under the Palaszczuk state Labor government, our state of Queensland—

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Martin): Order! Pause the clock. I ask that everyone ceases interjecting. The level of interjections is getting a bit loud. I cannot hear the member on his feet. If there are any more interjections, I will start issuing warnings.

**Dr ROWAN:** As I was saying, our state has seen questionable and substantial changes to our electoral system—all to benefit the Labor Party at the disadvantage of others, which again raises serious concerns of integrity.

In the area of education, there has been a raft of serious integrity and accountability matters that have warranted significant investigation over the course of the Palaszczuk state Labor government. This includes the appointment of a school principal for the inner city south state secondary college, including the former deputy premier meeting with a potential applicant as ‘a favour to a member of parliament’—a member of parliament to this day that the state Labor government has refused to publicly acknowledge. This saga also saw a senior public servant stood down on pay, with no comprehensive transparency over the investigative process, costing taxpayers over \$630,000 prior to his resignation.

Barely a week goes by when I am not contacted by parents, teachers and staff who share with me their utter disappointment and disgust with the Labor government’s failure to act on serious integrity matters related to our education system and the Department of Education, particularly as they relate to proper administration, due process and full and transparent investigations. Under the Minister for Education, we have seen millions of dollars in cost overruns approved without proper authorisations, allegations and substantiated findings of human rights abuses within Queensland schools and the Department of Education, as well as allegations of school asbestos exposure cover-ups and failures to follow safety protocols. The government continues to not be transparent when it comes to some of the most basic questions on teacher workforce issues which continue to be raised by many parents and teachers right across Queensland. There is no clear and consistent transparency on comprehensive plans to address these serious issues across Queensland. These are just a handful of examples of the decline in our state government’s system of integrity.

*(Time expired)*