




Speech By  
**Hon. Craig Crawford**

**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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Record of Proceedings, 10 May 2022

**PUBLIC TRUSTEE (ADVISORY AND MONITORING BOARD) MANAGEMENT  
BILL**

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (6.56 pm): I rise in support of the Public Trustee (Advisory and Monitoring) Amendment Bill 2021. I commend the Community Support and Services Committee for their work and for their report on the bill. As Minister for Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, I support the inclusion of my department's director-general or nominee as a permanent board member. I also note and welcome the inclusion of a representative of First Nations peoples and a representative of the disability sector as board members to be appointed by the Attorney-General. Queensland has a strong disability sector and there is no shortage of strong, experienced Queenslanders with lived experience. It would be wonderful if one of the five appointed members of the board were nominated from our 900,000 senior cohort. I will leave that for the Attorney-General. There is no shortage of very experienced seniors with personal experience that could add quite a lot of weight to the proposed board.

For Queensland seniors this would provide a new level of trust knowing that they are represented—especially those in the twilight of their life who no longer have capacity to manage their affairs and have their financial interests entrusted to the Public Trustee. The decision to have the Public Trustee appointed for financial administration is a significant one. It is a significant change to a person's estate and how things are managed. Many families, including elderly parents of people with disability, seek support from the Public Trustee to manage their loved one's finances as a way of ensuring their needs and interests are protected into the future and that they are not exposed to the vulnerabilities of financial exploitation.

Currently my department provides support to 460 individuals living in supported accommodation and 62 per cent, or 285, of them have the Public Trustee appointed for financial administration. Financial administration takes all sorts of forms, including receiving and banking income, paying bills, budgeting for food and weekly expenses, planning and saving for larger purchases such as furniture or modified vehicles. Older people are vulnerable to exploitation as a result of ageing, and with that comes a fear of homelessness, social isolation and elder abuse. As a government we have many programs around elder abuse and we fund the elder abuse program. Generally, the common profile of a victim of elder abuse is an 84-year-old widow who is being abused by their own son or daughter. Research tells us that 72 per cent of cases are psychological and in 62 per cent of cases it is financial.

This bill provides additional oversight for the Public Trustee to improve its performance, transparency and public accountability. The board must act independently and in the public interest. As minister for some of the state's most vulnerable people, I welcome the extra oversight that is included in this bill. It is vital the public has full confidence that the Public Trustee will work in the best interests of those whom they represent. I commend the bill to the House.