




Speech By
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INTEGRITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

PUBLIC SECTOR BILL

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (3.23 pm): My contribution to the Public Sector Bill and Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill cognate debate will start by focusing on the fact that it is a cognate debate, and that should tell us all that we need to know. For two important matters such as this to be debated cognately is a true sign of how little regard the government has for both matters. This House has less debate and less scrutiny than ever before. This House has fewer sitting days than any other parliament on mainland Australia. This House has a committee system which the government wants to be nothing more than a rubber stamp and an estimates process that has been compromised. This is not the action of a government that wants to let the sunshine in.

I want to start by talking about the Public Sector Bill, particularly its genesis with the Bridgman review. It has taken four years after it was originally commissioned to get the next wave through. I question whether we would have seen any of these reviews if it were not for a damning report from Professor Coaldrake—yet here we are, four years later. The Public Service must be valued. It must be respected. It must provide fearless and frank advice. The Public Service needs job security.

The Premier has spent an inordinate amount of time conducting a scare campaign about the Public Service and has spent zero time fixing the culture of entrenched fear she has overseen. Today in this House—and indeed in recent times—we have seen a juvenile scare campaign. Today government members even sought to replicate the juvenile scare campaign we saw in another state. Let me give a message to the Public Service: few elected representatives learned the lesson of Public Service upheaval more than I did. I had to walk the floors and thank those public servants after I lost my seat. I say to every one of those public servants across the two departments I administered how much I valued and respected them. My record of valuing and respecting those public servants is something I am very proud of.

Amongst those public servants were a vast array of people in different areas from different backgrounds. Some have gone to other careers, including in public life. The mayor of Ipswich was one of those public servants. I knew her politics. She was treated no differently. So, too, was the member for Hervey Bay, who was a public servant in the local government department. He was a good public servant and did his job well. I knew his politics and I respected the job he did.

When it comes to reductions in the Public Service, two things stand out: Queenslanders have said unequivocally that they do not want them; and, equally importantly, they just do not work. A Public Service that is secure in its employment, empowered in decision-making and free to give fearless and frank advice will help a government drive more efficient projects and help rein in the billions of dollars of waste that is rife in this government. When those opposite seek to run yet another juvenile scare campaign, as they have repeatedly, time and time again—

Mr Walker: Tell us about a laptop.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I will get onto that. The current situation in the Public Service is one where its members do not feel valued and respected. The 2021 Working for Queensland survey results show how much a lack of leadership is impacting their ability to do the job. Some 34 per cent of public servants feel burnt out by their work; 38 per cent do not think that poor performance will be appropriately addressed in the workplace; 49 per cent think there is too much red tape in their work; and 25 per cent do not think their organisation is well managed—a lack of leadership, vision and compassion. This is a government that has checked out in its third term and, after 10 years in office, is trying to run yet another scare campaign aimed at a Public Service that does not feel valued or respected. Professor Coaldrake's review, which I suggest is the reason the Bridgman review has finally had the second iteration—

Ms Grace interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Pause the clock. The member for McConnel will cease her interjections.

Mr CRISAFULLI: Professor Coaldrake in his report spoke of 'an atmosphere of fear'—fear of unwanted career impacts and loss of employment status for unwelcome advice. That is not fearless or frank. The report speaks of pressure from some ministerial staffers for responses that minimise problems—ministerial staffers walking around like they were generals. It also speaks of discouragement from providing written advice on difficult topics and of senior public servants directing employees to sanitise advice and alter recommendations to align with what was presumed to be the minister's position. We saw an example of the altering of a report by the then state archivist on the mangocube email saga where comments damaging to the government were removed—a state archivist who was pressured.

Ms Grace: Discredited.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I wish to take the interjection. This is a state archivist who the minister is now saying is discredited because he wanted to blow the whistle on a dodgy, rotten government; a state archivist whose only crime was to want to bell the cat when it comes to a minister asking for a report to be changed to protect the bacon of another minister. That is the culture. Never have I wanted an interjection more than that one. From the author of making up stories comes discredited.

There was a director-general taking steps to prevent a report from reaching the minister's ears so as to ensure that the minister could continue to plausibly deny knowledge of the matter, and we still do not know who that director-general was. Are any of those opposite going to explain that and talk about the culture?

The Auditor-General's report titled *Managing workforce agility in the Queensland public sector*, released in November, highlighted workforce planning in the Queensland public sector is not sophisticated enough to build and grow a workforce that can meet changing needs and priorities. We all know we need more doctors and nurses on the front line. We all know that police numbers have not only not kept pace with population and rising crime but also not kept pace with attrition.

An opposition member: What about teachers?

Mr CRISAFULLI: Teachers on the front line have had promises made to them that should have been promises kept. The minister's only solution to misleading people on the teacher promise was to try to move the goalposts. The Auditor-General's report states—

The public sector is unwieldy due to long-established hierarchical structures and processes, and a silo approach.

Finally, it also stated that 'only 10 of the 20 departments have developed and implemented a strategic workforce plan'.

I want to thank the public servants who have bravely spoken out; the brave, respected public servants calling out the bad behaviour of this bullyboy government—the former integrity commissioner and the former state archivist who again has been slurred in this place. The opposition is regularly contacted by public servants willing to shed light on the government's failures. It has been the public servants who have asked the health minister to go looking for where the shortfalls come, where the ambo has not been and where they have not been able to meet the demands. Imagine the frustration of that ambo waiting at the end of a ramp when they know at the end of a line is a Queenslanders who cannot be served.

Public servants are telling us what documents to RTI. I say to each and every one of them that we have respected their confidence and, as a result, the leaks will keep coming. This gives me confidence that, at its core, the Public Service is made up of a great group of people who want a better future for Queensland. We intend to give it to them. Why does this matter? Queenslanders rely on public servants to deliver the services they need every day. If public servants cannot focus on service delivery, if the culture is rotten, if the pressure is there every Queenslanders suffers.

The LNP will not be voting against this bill, but this is not a vote of confidence in the way that this government treats public servants. To quote the Coaldrake review: 'The tone set at the top is essential.' If Premier and her government do not change, all the legislation in the world will not fix the systemic culture that has been able to develop for over seven years—a culture of entrenched fear. Examples of this government not willing to change have been plentiful in recent weeks alone. We had a minister who sat on a report that was 13 months old and that she had for eight months take it out at 8 pm on the day their youth crime crisis came to the fore. We had the Linc cover-up where a minister aware of contamination on adjacent land failed to tell the council, the community, conservationists or even the landowners. We have the government funding Jackie Trad's legal case to keep a CCC report secret. We had the sacking of the Mackay Hospital board while the media was focusing on a DV report. We had the member for Maryborough calling for public servants who had raised issues with Professor Coaldrake to be identified and questioned about an anti-Labor agenda.

When it comes to a government that I lead, I reflect again on the words of Professor Coaldrake—'The tone set at the top is essential.' We are serious about changing the culture around the way the government empowers the Public Service. That is why we will have a minister for integrity. The government does not have one. They do not believe in it. They had a chance to talk about integrity and made the debate cognate. That is why a government I lead will have a minister for open data and it will be a serious minister for open data.

Public information will be public. It will drive ministerial accountability. It will drive a culture of service. It will drive a culture of improvement. It will mean that Queenslanders can be proud of the services they get and public servants can be proud of the ministers to whom they give fearless and frank advice and who are willing to accept it. That is the way the organisation must work.

A government I lead will have a minister for customer service. It is something the government will not entertain because it does not value the relationship between the Public Service and the customer. If a government is serious about ensuring that Queenslanders have a world-class service they will put customer service at the forefront. I look at the contrast between New South Wales and Queensland when data was breached and it came to the replacement of people's licences. I look at the contrast between the line-ups versus a simple approach because the government did not listen to the Public Service that was giving advice about how to empower people to keep the data and give it in a non-harmful way.

The LNP believes in a Westminster government where the Public Service gives fearless and frank advice. I want public servants to be as enthusiastic about delivering the outcomes for Queenslanders as Queenslanders are about receiving them. I give a message to those public servants listening: we look forward to working with you. We believe that Queensland's best days lie ahead of it. The customer and the public servant will go together and form a relationship that makes everyone proud to be a Queenslanders.

The LNP supports the amendments following the Electoral Commissioner Mr Vidgen's concerns about some of the potential impacts of the legislation. We welcome those changes. To think that there could have been a perceived or real threat to the ECQ's independence is, quite frankly, incredible.

In terms of the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, the government is walking away from its commitment to implement the Coaldrake review lock, stock and barrel. Professor Coaldrake recommends removing the power of the Treasurer to approve the fees of the Queensland Audit Office. Instead, this bill gives the power to a parliamentary committee that the Treasurer can advise.

This is the first tranche of Coaldrake review related reform. The government has not committed to when the reforms will be implemented lock, stock and barrel. Will they take years to introduce further reforms like they have with the Bridgman review? Are they just waiting until people have moved on and we are all focused on another crisis? Will the government ever be serious about integrity? This legislation is intended to make it look like the government is acting on the integrity crisis that has gripped this government. It is a half-baked effort at best. Where are the cabinet documents that the government promised would be released in 30 days? The government committed to that over 150 days ago.

Where are the measures to address the poor behaviour of ministerial advisers against public servants? Where is the plan to prevent greater oversight of complaints made against senior public servants? These are just some of the Coaldrake review recommendations that the government has conveniently forgotten about and we will not—

Mr Smith: No announcements, no action.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I take that interjection because it is always about the announcements. It is always about the media release. There is never the analysis of planning, delivering and evaluating. The government does not have the discipline to plan, deliver and evaluate. That is the reason the Public Service feels so uninspired by them. That is why there is an entrenched culture of fear.

This legislation is intended to make it look like the government is acting, but all it is doing is buying time. The failure to act shows that the government is not serious about improving integrity. Again, if we do not see a government committed to change then nothing will change.

The LNP welcomes the provisions in this bill to provide more independence for the Integrity Commissioner—and don't we know that is needed! The LNP fought for more independence for the Integrity Commissioner when a laptop was taken without her consent. It should never have happened, and that is why we were so strident in our defence. The Integrity Commissioner wanted to stay on for estimates to answer questions and the government would not allow her. That tells you everything you need to know.

Ms Grace: When you resign, you resign. That is normally what happens.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I take the interjection from the education minister. The education minister said, 'When you resign, you resign.' After the bullying and intimidation and standover tactics, the Integrity Commissioner was not allowed to speak—

Ms Grace: You're making it up. That is unfounded and you know it.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I will take the interjection. If someone could give her a microphone, we could do a duet here. This is magnificent. This was an Integrity Commissioner who just wanted the ability to tell her story. Officers of the Queensland Integrity Commissioner are subject only to the direction of the Integrity Commissioner.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Pause the clock. Members, the volume is getting too loud. I have been extremely generous in allowing for debate. That generosity will be withdrawn from now. I will start cautioning members.

Mr CRISAFULLI: The budget of the Integrity Commissioner is still set by the government. I call on the government to adequately resource the Integrity Commissioner to perform its functions to the highest standard. Queenslanders want, and deserve, an Integrity Commissioner that is independent in every sense of the word. The LNP will fight to achieve this.

I note that an amendment will be introduced by the LNP to implement changes to the approval process for the Auditor-General's fees to bring the legislation in line with the Coaldrake recommendations. The opposition should not have to do this. The way the government has introduced this legislation to make it look like the power of the Treasurer to influence the Audit Office, through approval of their fees, has been removed shows that the government has not changed. Even in the amendment they still cannot bring themselves to be open and transparent. The government are only interested in maintaining their power.

I conclude by saying the following: the fact that this debate is cognate, the fact that one of the government's most senior ministers has used the last 20 minutes to besmirch the very people who triggered the integrity crisis burning through this government, the fact that there are recommendations from Professor Coaldrake that could have been implemented immediately and they have continued to stall, the fact that the government would do nothing other than run a juvenile scare campaign to try to belittle and bully Queenslanders because of a lack of vision, show everything you need to know about this government. Whilst we will be supporting this cognate legislation today, I make this point: nothing short of a royal commission into this dodgy rotten government will get to the bottom of what is rotting Queensland—a tired, third-term government.

Ms PEASE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member used unparliamentary language. I ask him to withdraw.

Mr Mander: In your opinion.

Ms PEASE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to another point of order against the member for Everton at the back who made disparaging comments to me as well.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Member for Lytton, is your point of order taking personal offence?

Ms PEASE: No. My point of order was that the member for Broadwater used unparliamentary language. That was my first point of order.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will take advice on that point of order first. Member for Broadwater, you did make unparliamentary comments. I ask that you withdraw.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I withdraw.