



Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace


MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

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INTEGRITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

PUBLIC SECTOR BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (3.37 pm), in reply: I thank all members for their contributions during the cognate debate of the Public Sector Bill 2022 and the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. From the outset, I want to reiterate to this House the Palaszczuk government's deep appreciation and gratitude to our hardworking and dedicated public sector workers, especially those on the front line. COVID has magnified the critical role these workers play in keeping Queenslanders safe each and every day.

In my second reading speech, I spoke about how this debate was an opportunity for those opposite to apologise for their past actions and unfounded claims. I even provided some guidance on two topics: their outrageous and scaremongering comments concerning unfounded integrity allegations, which I might add they kept perpetuating with conspiracy theories that were unfounded and absolutely baseless, and their savage cuts to the Public Service. There was, however, no contrition, no apology, no atonement. Instead, we were subjected to historical revisionism. Like a broken record, everybody kept getting up and saying exactly the same thing in line with the script they were provided. Apparently, those opposite deeply respect and value our Public Service. All I can say is that actions speak louder than words, and the sacking of over 14,000 workers tells a very different story.

No-one was worried about their cost-of-living expenses and how they were going to provide for their families when they were ruthlessly sacked. Then to add insult to injury they indicated that they were actually made redundant, that they did not want them to go. It was, 'No, it wasn't us; it was them. They wanted to go. Nothing to see here. It's all okay.' Public sector workers have a right to safe, secure and dignified work. We are proud of our history in restoring fairness and job security for Queensland's public sector, and these reforms build upon this important work.

The public sector and its workers have a unique and critical role in supporting the government to reframe its relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queensland. This is underpinned by the Path to Treaty and Local Thriving Communities reforms. On this side of the House, we are committed to implementing the Uluru Statement from the Heart and supporting a Voice to Parliament. On that side of the House, who knows? They voted against it at their state council meeting over the weekend which was reported in the paper, but would not commit to a position yesterday. They all stood up and said that they did not read it or they did not understand it or they did not understand what the detail was, yet they came into this House yesterday with all of the excuses under the sun and failed to take a stand.

Those opposite also continue to peddle and perpetuate integrity claims that have been found demonstrably and beyond doubt—independent reviewers finding beyond doubt—not to be true. They continue to repeat them, and the persons that they continue to speak about have been cleared, every single one of them.

When it comes to integrity issues, those opposite have a long, sordid and disgraceful history. We have seen successive National and LNP governments embroiled in integrity scandals, reducing scrutiny and attacking integrity bodies. I can think of a lot worse things than this Labor government, let me tell you, but maybe the member for Currumbin was not born during the Fitzgerald Inquiry. Don't we all remember that one! It started then and has not subsided.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Order, members!

Ms GRACE: And they still did not learn! Then we had—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I was calling the House to order. I will start warning members.

Ms GRACE: Then we turn to the disastrous, short-lived Newman government. It was absolutely amazing what went on in that short period of time of three years. Just like the Borbidge government made attempts to dismantle the CJC through the Connolly-Ryan inquiry, the Newman government followed in their footsteps and gutted the CMC. They sacked 26 staff, effectively hobbling its ability to investigate crime and corruption, subverted the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee until the former attorney-general, the member for Kawana, got sick of its scrutiny and sacked the whole committee, the majority made up of their own members, in the dead of night on 21 November 2013. They are the facts! Who else has sacked an entire committee of the parliament like that? None other than the member for Kawana! At every opportunity he does nothing more than stand with vicious and unprecedented attacks on our very democracy and people. Can I give a word of warning to the backbenchers? It is not working. It did not work in Victoria and it ain't gonna work here. Finally, because the CMC was still too effective at looking at crime and corruption, the LNP, including those now sitting opposite, dismantled it and replaced it with the CCC which had less powers and where the government could appoint its own commissioners.

Let's take a real look at the integrity of the other side. The member for Mudgeeraba had to resign as a minister after an investigation into her son's appointment to a position within disgraced former director-general Michael Caltabiano's department. Michael Caltabiano lobbied for the member for Mudgeeraba's lobbyist firm. Michael Caltabiano, former Liberal MP and former state party president, was appointed the director-general of Transport in 2012. He was eventually stood down after it was revealed he had misled estimates about the relationship with the member for Mudgeeraba's son, but not until he had collected over \$650,000 from taxpayers.

Bruce Flegg had to resign as minister after he had had undeclared contacts with his lobbyist son. Mark Brodie, a close mate of Campbell Newman and the member for Clayfield, and LNP donor, was appointed to the Gladstone Ports Corporation. Jeff Seeney used his ministerial powers to help the owner of a caravan park in Maroochydore, against the wishes of the local council and his own department. The owner just happened to be an LNP donor who would have millions of dollars added to the value of his property overnight.

The member for Kawana strikes again: he awarded the contract for one of his boot camps—and we all remember the boot camps—to a company which donated \$5,500 to the LNP a week after being awarded the tender. The company's bid was twice the price of rival bidders and ranked 10th on the independent bid process.

The member for Nanango, when opposition leader, was accused of holding five fundraisers attended by prohibited donors in the 2020 election. The LNP head office were so concerned about this they asked the ECQ to investigate. Who could forget the integrity guru, the member for Maroochydore, who, as Speaker, was so afraid of scrutiny in the chamber that she banned TV cameras—twice!

I could go on, but the clock is against me. Those opposite have done nothing to distance themselves from, or call out, the abhorrent behaviour of Scott Morrison who appointed himself secretly to five ministries when prime minister—unprecedented! He did not tell the parliament, he did not tell the public and he did not even tell his own colleagues. How disappointed are they in him? Given the opportunity to condemn his actions, their LNP mates in Canberra instead voted against his parliamentary censure just today. Embarrassing! This is happening right now before our eyes, and they are in here drumming up rubbish. Those opposite have the temerity to come in here and talk about secrecy. This was behaviour that the inquiry by Justice Bell found 'fundamentally undermined'—

Mr Boothman interjected.

Ms GRACE: This is happening right now, members. You might not want to hear, but it is happening right now!

Mr Boothman interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Theodore, cease your injections.

Ms GRACE:—the principles of responsible government and was 'corrosive of trust in government'. They also have not raised concerns about his conduct as minister for social services as a result of the revelations from the robodebt inquiry or his sorry failure to deliver on a promise to establish a national anti-corruption commission, something that has been left to an Albanese federal Labor government to deliver. Who delivers on integrity? Labor does! Those opposite even go to an election promising it and, 'Oh, we forgot.' They had 10 years to get it done—no, not important. It was great to see this passed in the federal parliament today—delivered today, not after 10 years after promising it and delivered by a Labor government. I find it laughable when the member for Kawana comes in here today, on the same day that the former prime minister was censured by the House of Representatives, to lecture us about integrity in ministerial roles or ministerial transparency and accountability.

I find it interesting that the Greens have also lectured this side of the House about integrity. This is the same political party which, according to the *Courier-Mail*, face accusations from former members that it funnelled JobKeeper payments into the member for Maiwar's own election campaign. If they are not allegedly misusing JobKeeper payments, we all know they are being funded by gambling money which they then talk against. It is extraordinary! As the member for Redlands said in her speech, you could not write it if you wanted to. They also failed to adequately deal with in-house integrity issues, such as a recent scandal surrounding former deputy leader Lidia Thorpe, so I find it a bit rich hearing from them about integrity as well.

At the same time the Greens were in here last night getting on their high horses about integrity, their federal colleagues were actively delaying the passage of Labor's federal integrity bill, threatening to vote for the LNP amendments and jeopardising the passage of the National Anti-Corruption Commission Bill. We pass integrity laws; they play politics with integrity.

When it comes to the Public Sector Bill, I am immensely proud that a central component focuses on reframing its relationship with First Nations people. What a disappointment that the Greens could not even be bothered to turn up to debate our motion about the Uluru Statement yesterday. It is typical of the Greens: virtue signalling galore but never there when it really counts.

As I indicated at the commencement of this debate, these two bills represent significant milestones in delivering the government's commitments. The Public Sector Bill 2022 delivers on the commitment to ensure Queensland's public sector is fair, responsive, inclusive and a leader in public administration. The Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 is the first tranche of legislative amendments, just like in the Public Sector Bill this is the second tranche, which they kept saying we had not done. However, I actually was the minister who led the Public Sector Bill reforms before the last election. Get it right, read the bill and understand what you are debating, instead of reading off a pre-prepared script. The Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 is the first tranche of legislative amendments arising from Professor Peter Coaldrake's report, *Let the sunshine in: review of culture and accountability in the Queensland public sector*.

I now turn to matters raised during the debate concerning the Public Sector Bill. The members for Broadwater and Moggill were critical of the time taken to implement the Bridgman review and suggested the delivery of the stage 2 reforms was only occurring because it is politically beneficial to do so. These are completely false assertions. The stage 1 reforms culminated in priority reforms being progressed quickly through the amendments to the Public Service Act 2008 in 2020, as I said. As foreshadowed at the time, this was the first tranche of the implementation of the Bridgman review. Since then extensive work has occurred on stage 2 reforms, including the development of a comprehensive new, modern public sector act, which is reflected in the bill. Implementing stage 2 reforms has been complex and time intensive. This included reviewing employment arrangements for around 230,000 public sector employees and consideration of the nature of over 200 public sector bodies. An extensive consultation process was also undertaken.

The member for Redlands noted in her speech the different demands on public sector employees and that many of them work in challenging and sometimes dangerous environments. The bill provides that, when deciding the person best suited to a position, the recruitment and selection process must consider each eligible applicant's ability to perform the requirements of the position. This could include the extent to which the person has the abilities, aptitude, skills, qualifications, knowledge, experience and personal qualities relevant to carrying out the duties of the position.

This bill has been the subject of extensive consultation with Queensland government agencies and public sector unions. As previously noted, the Palaszczuk government is committed to an integrated and responsive public sector that acts with purpose and integrity, focused on improving the lives of Queenslanders. That is why this bill replaces existing Public Service legislation with a modern, simplified and employee focused legislative framework that applies beyond the Public Service to the broader public sector.

The bill also introduces new forward-thinking changes to strengthen fairness and responsiveness. This includes recognising the role of the public sector in supporting the government to reframe its relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and establishing a nation-leading equity, diversity, respect and inclusion framework to ensure that the public sector is truly representative of the people it serves. This bill provides the legislative foundation for ensuring the public sector in Queensland is fair, responsive and inclusive and that this government is a leader in public administration. I commend the Public Sector Bill to the House.

I now turn to matters raised during the debate concerning the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Several opposition members criticised the lack of speed with which the Coaldrake report has been implemented. It took the Morrison government 10 years to implement an integrity system federally, and guess what? They got a big fat F because they failed; they did not do it.

The Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 was introduced on 14 October 2022—3½ months after the release of the Coaldrake report—and represents the first tranche of legislation.

An opposition member: How much? How much?

Ms GRACE: They cannot sit there and interject when their own federal government could not even establish a national integrity body in 10 years. That is unbelievable.

This bill represents the first tranche of legislation to strengthen the integrity and oversight framework of Queensland. Let me say there is no credibility opposite when it comes to these issues. Only Labor governments deliver.

As previously noted, the bill is the first tranche of amendments that demonstrates the Palaszczuk government's commitment to strengthen our integrity and oversight framework so that it remains contemporary and maintains and improves a culture of accountability. The bill continues the delivery of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to implement the reforms outlined in Professor Coaldrake's report. It will improve transparency and accountability of the public sector and its related delivery of services with further reforms building on this foundation to be considered and implemented in 2023.

I also note that the recommendation of the committee that considered both of these bills was that they be passed. I commend the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill to the House.