




Speech By
Kim Richards

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2022

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

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (3.39 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Public Trustee (Advisory and Monitoring Board) Amendment Bill 2021. As the member for McConnel said, there is not a person in this place who does not have, at the centre of everything we do every day, a desire to make sure that the most vulnerable in our community are cared for and have the right supports.

The Public Trustee plays an extraordinarily vital role in our community. As we have heard, it services over 10,000 Queenslanders—some of the most vulnerable in our community. This bill is about bringing a stronger sense of governance to and framework around how the Public Trustee operates. We have heard that it does not always go right. It deals with extraordinarily complex cases involving financial matters and families. I think everybody in this place would know somebody who has had experience of or been part of those complex issues. The Public Trustee plays a vital role. In addition to free will making, it provides services relating to enduring powers of attorney; deceased estate management; the appointment of financial administrators; and the management and investment of trusts for beneficiaries who are minors, for those who have disability and for a number of philanthropic trusts.

There are over 600 professional service providers under the Public Trustee that work across the state providing those services. In the Redlands last week I had the opportunity to visit the Donald Simpson Centre, one of our seniors centres, with Minister Crawford for the Redlands Seniors Expo. A range of government service and support providers were there to provide important information to our seniors. It was great for them to have access to information about the range of services that the Public Trustee and other service providers supply to our seniors.

This bill outlines the functions and powers of the board. That will include monitoring of performance. It is really important to have those checks and balances. The establishment of this board will ensure that the Public Trustee's functions provide the advice and recommendations that the people they service need. The board will monitor and review the performance of the trustee's functions and monitor the complaints received from the Public Trustee about the performance of the Public Trustee's functions. We have heard how important it will be to have that additional layer of oversight. It will be able to give written advice and recommendations to the minister on changes that may be required to legislation. It will give advice and recommendations to the Public Trustee about matters pertaining to the performance of its functions.

It was a great recommendation in the committee's report to include the additional membership of somebody with lived experience on the board. I do not think anybody in this place underestimates the value that somebody with lived experience brings to any context. In this space, it will be really important to have somebody with that experience on the board.

The composition of the board is extraordinarily detailed. The skills, experience and qualifications that are required within the board's membership will certainly well serve the Public Trustee and the people the Public Trustee serves. Board members will include the chief executive, the director-general,

of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General or their delegated executive; the chief executive of the department in which the Financial Accountability Act is administered; the chief executive of the department in which the Disability Services Act is administered; the chief executive of the department that is mainly responsible for seniors; and the chief executive of the department that is responsible for the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act.

We have heard about things that go wrong. I am sure many members have had complaints from constituents about service provision within the NDIS and issues around price gouging. When we talk about providing transparency and accountability, I would ask: why has the federal government not made good on their election promise in 2019 to deliver a federal ICAC to make sure that we can stay across issues and have more transparency, particularly in the NDIS space?

Other board requirements that are noted within the bill relate to meeting arrangements, integrity of members, confidentiality and reporting by the Public Trustee. I noted that throughout the process the committee took a number of submissions from a variety of submitters.

The board will be accountable to the parliament through the tabling of an annual report to the parliament. This will give the community the assurance that the board's recommendations will be heard not only by the Public Trustee but also by the people in this place. The bill gives the board the necessary tools to perform its roles and to perform that oversight function. Listed in detail in the explanatory notes are the skills and experience required of board members. It ranges from experience in the seniors and disability sector to financial capability and experience.

When we talk about how we fund the services of the Public Trustee, we know that the Public Trustee manages a range of investments. I thank the chair of the committee, the member for Mansfield, and all committee members for their work. I thank the Attorney-General for bringing this important piece of legislation to this House to ensure our Palaszczuk government has in place the right checks, balances and mechanisms to ensure we are taking care of the most vulnerable in our community. I commend this bill to the House.