




Speech By
Linus Power

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

Record of Proceedings, 29 November 2022

INTEGRITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

PUBLIC SECTOR BILL

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (3.46 pm): What we have just heard was remarkable. We know that he has to creep away because he cannot hack—

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Pause the clock. Members, I will ask for silence.

Mr STEVENS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member knows quite rightly that there are to be no comments about members not in their chairs or outside the House.

Mr POWER: My apologies, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was merely making reference to the opposition leader creeping around the chamber, not outside the chamber.

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, I ask that we resume the debate in a professional, collegiate way as far as we can. The member for Logan has the call. I did not hear the comment; however, there is a custom. I will allow the member to return to his debate and ask that he be heard in silence.

Mr POWER: That was a truly remarkable speech when we know that 14,000 public servants were sacked. We did not hear the member for Broadwater reflect on those 14,000 public servants who were sacked. Instead, we heard the member for Broadwater reflect on his own sacking. He talked about wandering the halls so sad and lonely as a cloud. He was not worried about the 14,000 public servants he sacked, nor indeed the services that had been cut. He was only worried about his own job being cut. This is disappointing and is a reflection on the member for Broadwater. If we were ever unfortunate enough in Queensland to have his leadership, we would see those 14,000 workers sacked again. They would include 4,400 health workers and 1,800 nurses and midwives. We cannot risk that.

I also need to mention that this was an opportunity for the member for Broadwater to show some true leadership, to show the House that he is contrite and understands what integrity is about. He should have apologised for the debacle that was Investigation Workshop and the false accusations that were perpetuated by the member for Broadwater and the member for Maroochydoore that were contained in this document *Investigation Workshop*.

Mr Hart: Read clauses 59, 60, 61 and 62.

Mr POWER: The member for Burleigh says to read it. It says—

There was no evidence of improper disclosure.

It says that on the front page. It continues—

The circumstances in which the laptops were retrieved ... the descriptions of 'raid' and 'seizure' do not reflect the reality of what occurred. Further, the circumstances in which one laptop was 'wiped' are wholly unremarkable.

This would be an opportunity for someone who purports to be the shadow minister for integrity or a future minister for integrity to say, 'I recognise that the CCC has made an adverse finding against misinformation on issues of integrity.' Even though the member for Broadwater is so weak that he is unable to make an apology to this House, this would be an opportunity for the member for Maroochydore to do the right thing and try and creep back some credibility. I will not be holding my breath, but this is their opportunity. The CCC's adverse finding against this misinformation hangs over the head of the member for Maroochydore.

I came to speak on the Public Sector Bill and the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I want to thank the committee for its good work. We have a good relationship when trying to deal with these important issues. We are often distracted by the misinformation of the shadow front bench. The Public Service we have should reflect the great diversity that is Queensland. All workforces in Queensland should embrace diversity and not miss out, but especially the Public Service because it serves all Queenslanders. We also want to note that having standards there so workers have security is important because that is how families know they have a secure and stable income.

When we look at previous generations of the Public Service sometimes it was treated like an exclusive club. We have to wonder how many opportunities we had to employ fantastic Queenslanders we threw away. If we are not welcoming these people we are missing out on getting the very best. As a third generation teacher, I know what a great difference teachers make in life. We want the best. My own grandmother Tess was from a generation who was forced to leave her teaching profession when she got married. Grandma Tess would have continued to be a great teacher, but our Public Service and our students were worse off because of these rules. At that point the majority of teachers were men; however, now 80 per cent of our teachers are women. The education department encourages flexible work arrangements to keep teachers in the workforce and continue to make a difference. I myself as a young teacher taught part-time with another teacher who chose to use the flexibility offered. We acted as a team and taught the curriculum together. As was made clear in the introductory speech of the Premier, it absolutely maintains the primacy of merit in hiring and promotion processes but it also ensures we are not ignoring the merit of those who are sometimes overlooked.

So often the work of our public servants is attacked—like the member for Broadwater does—in the popular media and by those opposite. We hear constant attacks on bureaucrats and 'fat cats'. That is what they all say; however, on this side we value the hard work of public servants. In Logan I know the teachers, the TMR RoadTek crews—they were out there today fixing potholes—the paramedics on the Mount Lindesay Highway. I know how hard they work and how demanding their jobs are.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr POWER: This might be something of interest to the opposition. An example came to mind several years ago when a family comprised of a mother, grandmother, the 11-year-old daughter and a toddler were swept away in the floodwaters of a raging Norris Creek. A neighbour heard their distant cries as they clung to trees in the foaming water and called triple 000. When the Beenleigh swiftwater rescue team arrived the neighbour pointed them into the darkness. She said to me, 'The guy hooked onto a tree, looked straight ahead and then transformed into a superhero—arms pumping, diving into the unknown—with one thing on his mind: rescuing his fellow Queenslanders.' Without all of their experience, training and personal dedication those four Queenslanders—my constituents—would not have survived. That is why this act maintains merit absolutely. When you need to be rescued in a terrible situation like this you want the absolute best.

As I said, we maintain the primacy of merit, but so often in the past we have overlooked merit by consciously or unconsciously using bias or even discrimination in the hiring of public servants. We often overlooked the best people for positions because senior public servants thought those who needed to be promoted were those who looked, were educated like, or acted just like themselves. This excluded those who often had so much to give in the service of Queenslanders. We have made tremendous changes to overcome this. We all recognise that traditionally women like my grandmother were shut out of serving, especially in more senior roles, but this is no longer the case.

As many would know, our Public Service is almost 70 per cent female, but in the past they were limited to lower positions. Now we have seen a transformation and women are rightfully in stronger leadership positions. For example, the 2022 gender pay dashboard tells us that two-thirds of the AO8 positions are held by female workers and over 60 per cent of senior officer or equivalent positions are held by women. If the leadership of female public servants was ignored in the past, then this dashboard clearly shows that the Palaszczuk government is no longer ignoring real merit and ensuring that we have the best to be promoted. The majority of working age Queenslanders are male, but this shows just how attractive working for the Queensland government is to women and how much we benefit from recruiting, training and promoting all Queenslanders with fantastic leadership skills for the service of Queenslanders.

The challenge is greater in that there is an even more corrosive history of the exclusion of Indigenous Australians. I hope we all in this place recognise that as an act of reconciliation and inclusion we want to make sure we take advantage of the insight, connection, skills and leadership of Indigenous Australians. Unlike the transformation of the role of women, there is still much more work to be done to see the same success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. I look forward to departments making plans for inclusion. Not only do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have so much to offer the Public Service but they also bring their life experience and knowledge to specific services to improve health and educational outcomes for fellow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. While maintaining the primacy of merit, this bill asks chief executives to undertake an annual audit and make a plan to improve equity among Indigenous people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disability and women. This is why, after public hearings and deliberation, the committee joined together to recommend the bill be passed and ensure that merit reflects the great diversity of our Queensland population.

I also endorse the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The bill reflects recommendations in the Coaldrake and Yearbury reports. The bill makes changes to the Auditor-General Act, the Integrity Act and the Ombudsman Act. It strengthens the roles of these statutory officers and makes refinements to their roles. I also note the amendment of the minister. I commend the bills to the House.