



Speech By  
**Melissa McMahon**


**MEMBER FOR MACALISTER**

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**INTEGRITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**PUBLIC SECTOR BILL**

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (4.08 pm): I might actually talk to the contents of this bill just for something different. Opposition members over there have been lauding public servants and portraying themselves as the protectors and saviours of public servants. Did I miss something? When did we get to Disneyland? In the Public Service that I was in and the public servants that I speak to on a daily basis, there is not one of them who would trust a single word that comes out of opposition members when it comes to protecting—

**Mr Stevens** interjected.

**Mrs McMAHON:** I will take that interjection because the administrative officers at our police stations were not spared under the Newman government. Those admin officers who diligently do the administrative work of police officers were not spared. They lost their jobs under the Newman government which meant police officers had to do more work because we lost our admin officers.

They took police officers off the road because there was not a public servant and AO that they did not want to sack regardless of whether it was the QPS. I will not sit here and listen to those opposite pretend to be the protectors and saviours of the Public Service because we know and, more importantly, the public servants out there know, that they cannot be trusted. Those memories run deep in the public service and they know; they do not forget. The staff at my local police station still refer to that night as 'the night of the long knives' when they did not know if they were going to come in to a job the next day. That is how they remember life under an LNP government.

As a member of the committee that considered both of these bills, I would like to acknowledge the committee members, the able secretariat and, as always, the organisations who made submissions to the two inquiries that we conducted. Firstly examining the integrity bill, it is the implementation of recommendations from the public sector reviews as well as the review of the Integrity Commission by Mr Kevin Yearbury. The amendments to the Auditor-General Act are designed to improve the independence of the Queensland Audit Office. In a state where key services are delivered by the Queensland government and as a party that sees the role of government in ensuring the health, wellbeing and safety of its population a cornerstone of government functions, we understand the need to provide ongoing, continuous improvement of the public sector and how it manages its resources and delivers its services. A good government not only understands the need for oversight but actively encourages it through appropriate funding and staffing. An effective audit and integrity office is an independent one. By making the Auditor-General an officer of the parliament and demarking the Queensland Audit Office from the Public Service Act as proposed, this furthers the stated objective of increasing independence. An auditor-general and Queensland Audit Office that is at arm's length from the Public Service is better placed to review and make recommendations on improving the functioning of the Public Service. A creature of the Public Service is not in the best position to audit the Public Service.

Changes to the Integrity Act follow the strategic review of the Integrity Commission, as I said, by Mr Kevin Yearbury. The bill creates an Office of the Integrity Commissioner and position of deputy commissioner. The deputy commissioner position and the staff of the office will only be able to be directed by the Integrity Commissioner. This is once again about ensuring the independence of our oversight bodies. Being a member of the committee with oversight of the Integrity Commissioner, we have seen how the workload of the Integrity Commissioner has increased. We do see this as a good thing. Ensuring adequate staffing, resourcing and genuine independence of this very important role within democracy is key to this.

Turning to the Public Sector Bill, this bill sees the first tranche of public sector reforms drawn from the recommendations made in the Bridgman review and Coaldrake review. These recommendations are all about providing public sector employees with a modern, simplified and employee-focused framework. Much like the integrity bill I spoke about earlier, the bill also seeks to further increase independence of other integrity bodies such as the Queensland Ombudsman and the Crime and Corruption Commission. It does so by excluding them from the Public Sector Bill. However, the ability of these agencies to opt in to aspects of the bill allows the employees of these agencies to access the benefits and protections of the public sector employment framework while strengthening the independence of our integrity framework. Legal Aid Queensland is also excluded in order to protect Legal Aid Queensland's public benevolent institution status under the Commonwealth legislation.

This is a lengthy bill. There are a lot of amendments to be made in the way that the Public Service is structured in relation to permanency and other issues. Many aspects are designed to make the Public Service more inclusive and more representative of a modern Queensland and its people.

I would like to spend a bit of time talking about the bill's objective to strengthen equality of employment by placing positive duties on chief executives to ensure policies and programs promote equity, diversity, respect and inclusion. The bill defines diversity target group members as: firstly, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people; secondly, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; thirdly, people with a disability; and fourthly, women. There is also a provision to add diversity groups prescribed by regulation.

I note and would like to comment on submissions made calling on this bill to include the LGBTIQ+ community as a fifth diversity target group. I note the department's response that it was not a group identified in the Bridgman review and that there was insufficient evidence of underrepresentation of the LGBTIQ+ people in the public sector. During the inquiry, when questioned on this particular issue, considering it was a lack of evidence cited by the department, little evidence could alternatively be provided as to the actual numbers of LGBTIQ+ members employed in the public sector. There is a reason for this. What the inquiry also heard was many stories and examples of the way that LGBTIQ+ people are impacted as part of their public sector employment, the difficulty they experience in their workplaces and the communities that they work in. No survey is actually likely to give an accurate representation of LGBTIQ+ members in the public sector for the very reason they need to be represented. Despite this, I would like to see more consultation by the public sector with advocacy groups about how this evidence can be derived to understand the representation of this community.

I understand that the additional provision, as prescribed by regulation, does allow for the inclusion of this group and that it was the lack of evidence that was cited. I would certainly encourage the Public Service Commission to be proactive in identifying and undertaking what advocacy and what consultation needs to be done to ensure that these public sector employees who, for various reasons, choose not to self-identify feel included in this public sector. I commend the bills to the House.