



Speech By  
**Robbie Katter**


**MEMBER FOR TRAEGER**

---

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2022

**INTEGRITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**PUBLIC SECTOR BILL**

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (3.30 pm): I rise to attempt to make a brief contribution on this bill so my crossbench colleague has a chance to speak as well. That speaks to the principle we are discussing here and the risk of governments abusing power. We are always going to fight that. People will always watch and distrust whoever is in government—or there will be an element of that—and we will fight that abuse. The Coaldrake report was the attempt of the government to deal with some integrity issues that were raised around the place, but I think it hopelessly misses the mark.

There are some wonderful people who work in the Public Service and there is a wonderful history of what the Public Service has done in Queensland. I think I can speak on behalf of my crossbench colleagues here when I say that when we talk to members of the police about reporting or we ask people at a hospital how their budget is they run for the hills because they are too scared to talk. They will not tell us the truth. They will say, 'Crikey, I can't talk about that,' because they are worried about their job. It is hard to pin the government down and say that the government will sack them if they talk, but these people might not get the promotion next year. They know what the culture is that is embedded there. It is implied; it does not have to be something that is said or procured from some investigation or review. It is a sickness. We are certainly convinced that that is heavily embedded. The government have an enormous job to try to turn that around and convince us there are no integrity issues.

As a party, we are entitled to be fairly distrustful of governments having too much power, especially in a unicameral parliament, and I can list what has happened during my short experience here with the members for Hill and Hinchinbrook. When I first came in here, the laws were changed in the dead of the night before an adjournment, and Labor colluded with Liberal that night to make sure we were removed of resources. In that same term, we faced some legislation—and, again, the two major parties voted together—that disadvantaged the Independents in the returns they got from electoral funding laws. That did not affect the KAP so much, but I still objected to the principle of it.

In the federal government, we faced a change in laws that restricted electoral funding—again, to the detriment of anyone trying to break into that political space against major parties. We had the terrible events with the Premier when we lost our staff. As the member for Nanango referred to before, the Premier was found in contempt of parliament. We lost staff again, with another abuse of power. Here we are again with this public sector review and we are recommending better access for ministers into that space of operating in these areas. The government has a hell of a job to turn those things around. This falls hopelessly short, so good luck convincing the public that this will fix things around the place.

A bigger problem the government has is trying to govern the state properly when there are public servants who are too scared to report what they should be reporting in terms of trying to fix youth crime or health issues. We would love to play a more productive role with the government, but it is very hard if public servants do not have the courage to say what they should say to ministers on a regular

occasion. I see that all of the time. Ministers say to me, 'We're not picking up what you're hearing at home, Rob. That's not what we're hearing,' and I think, 'No kidding, because they're scared to lose their jobs.' That is the problem the government has to deal with, and it is why we lose great public servants who ran through government after government after government. They are employed and paid for by the people of Queensland. They are their resources; they are not the government's resources to toy around with or manipulate. They are there to feed through advice objectively, fearlessly and frankly. They are strongly inhibited by the integrity issues that have tainted this government, and that is a huge problem that is not covered by this bill. We see very little value in that.