




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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INTEGRITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

PUBLIC SECTOR BILL

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (2.26 pm): Today I rise to speak on the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Public Sector Bill. I start by asking the question: what is in a name, because Labor loves a good name, doesn't it? Have we not seen some absolute pearls in terms of—

Mrs Gerber: Satellite hospitals not hospitals.

Mr MOLHOEK: I take the interjection from the member for Currumbin—satellite hospitals that are not hospitals. I would like to reflect on one of my all-time favourite bills, and that was the Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) Bill—a bill that promised so much but delivered so little, and that is probably the best way to describe the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill: a bill that makes an attempt to address some of the longstanding issues, a bill that has a fantastic name—it is a very saleable name—but what great—

Mr McDonald: A bit of window-dressing.

Mr MOLHOEK: I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer: it is just great window-dressing. William Shakespeare in his play *Romeo and Juliet* asks the question: what is in a name? He made this point: he said that names themselves are a convention to distinguish things or people but in themselves do not have any worth or meaning, and that pretty much sums up the value of so many of the reforms that are identified in this legislation. We heard the member for Greenslopes talk about the Public Sector Bill as being a reset of the relationship with the Public Service—and boy doesn't it need a reset? I am sure the Public Service of Queensland would like to have a government leading it that actually listens to it, that actually does not scare it and create a cloud of cover over it so that it is too afraid to speak up.

I am sure the public servants of Queensland would like some support from their government. Look at the thousands of health workers and police and teachers and ambulance officers and child safety workers in our state right now who are struggling under the mismanagement of this government's ability to run the state and who are crying out for more staff, for more resources and for better support. The member for Greenslopes spoke about the need to improve the culture to create a better feeling of support and a culture of support within the public sector. I can tell members that when we travelled the state with the mental health inquiry that Labor threw up as a wonderful smokescreen to its own shortcomings in delivering better health services just two years ago, we heard from frontline workers who were disillusioned and frustrated by the amount of red tape and the amount of process that they were burdened with just to try to get the fundamentals of their job done.

We heard health workers say, 'I just want to spend my time seeing patients, not filling out paperwork. I just want to spend more time face to face with people who need me to care for them rather than worrying about covering my back and having to fill out more and more paperwork.' In Hervey Bay we met with a very large group of mental health support workers and we heard from some of them that

they were spending 80 per cent of their time pushing pens and filling in forms and only 20 per cent of their time with patients. That is not good enough. That is not the Queensland that Queenslanders deserve. The people of this state deserve better.

We heard members on the other side of the House talk about integrity. Over the last year or two what great integrity we have heard in terms of their excuses for all the reasons why we are seeing failings in the healthcare system and ambulance ramping and all the other challenges we are seeing across the state. The response is that it is unprecedented population growth. On Queensland Treasury's website and on the website of the Deputy Premier under State Development there are population forecasts that are provided so that the government of the day and local governments can actually plan. It might surprise the House to know that currently Treasury forecasts, at a median level of growth, that the population of Queensland will be about 5.4 million. Would anyone like to hazard a guess what the population of Queensland is currently at? It is about 5.4 million. There is no excuse for failing to plan because the government's own Treasury department has been telling it for decades that the population was going to be about 5.4 million.

This culture of secrecy that we have heard about through the Coaldrake report goes to every part of this government. There is a stench over the behaviour and actions of this government. The Coaldrake report states—

In every case, whether the trivialising of parliamentary committees, lack of independence needed by integrity bodies or lack of clarity about decision making, this can be reversed by a commitment to openness, supported by accountability. Any good government, clear in purpose and open and accountable in approach, should have fewer integrity issues.

What a wonderful committee system we have in the parliament! Report after report is presented to the parliament but there is no accountability to respond to the recommendations. They are just recommendations. Ministers of the government do not report back to us on the recommendations and provide advice as to what they will or will not do in response to those recommendations. In relation to the process of openness and scrutiny I was going to say I could not state how many times we have effectively been gagged through the committee process, but I am not supposed to speak about that in the House. The current process of committee meetings is that so many of the meetings are held in private that the people of Queensland would not even know how we get to vote on some issues because we are not allowed to say how we voted. We just have to say 'the committee recommended'. Time and time again we see the government using their numbers, and chairs using their casting vote, to progress forward the government's agenda.

The other concern that has been raised through the course of review of this legislation is around the effective gagging of the Auditor-General. I commend the Auditor-General and the Queensland Audit Office on their courage over the last few years with the many reports that they have produced to expose some of the systemic problems and challenges within government. Again in terms of the Queensland Audit Office we see no accountability by the government to respond to the recommendations because they are recommendations. The government of the day can choose to do whatever it wants and we have seen it on many occasions, whether it be the report into system failings with IT and implementation or whether it be reports into failings and waitlists for elective surgery or the good functioning of health and hospital services. So many recommendations of the Queensland Audit Office and the Auditor-General have simply been ignored.

This government needs to be held to account. The Coaldrake review states that the review could go further. We agree that it should. One senior executive captured the concerns by describing attempts to suppress public records and subvert the RTI process. We have experienced that on our side of the House. Many times members of the opposition have put in RTI requests only to have so many lines of the responses blacked out that it pretty much renders some of those responses almost meaningless. Well may the media ask questions about what the government is trying to cover up; what are they trying to hide. Queenslanders deserve an open and accountable government. As I have seen since my time as a councillor, Labor loves to tinker with the laws. In 2008 they ran inquiries into councils across the state. Nothing came out of those inquiries. It was a smokescreen to cover up their own shortcomings. How many times have we seen the Labor government tinker with the electoral laws? The list goes on. It is time for a change of government in this state. These laws do not go far enough.