




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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INTEGRITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

PUBLIC SECTOR BILL

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (2.46 pm): I follow the member for Ferny Grove who says the Palaszczuk government is committed to integrity. They are committed to integrity so long as it is a story running on the front page of the newspaper or the lead story in the news every night, because this government had to be dragged, kicking and screaming, to introduce legislation. For weeks the Premier denied there was no problem with any integrity issue in her government. She said, 'It's unnecessary.' She said, 'There's nothing to see here.' It was only when public pressure, brought about by the LNP opposition, drew this government to the conclusion that they had to act that they appointed Peter Coaldrake to conduct the review. Even today, after promising lock, stock and barrel to implement the reforms, we see a measly number of those reforms introduced. It is not lock, stock and barrel; it is 'more to come', 'wait and see' and 'hope everyone forgets about it and see where we go from there'.

Let us deal with the myth of this government's commitment to integrity. They only do it when they are forced to do it. They only do it when there is no other option and they can no longer duck and weave. When the Premier's spin doctors, however many of them there are—30, 40, 50? The number gets higher. They say Dan Andrews has 91. Are we also heading down that path? It is when the spin doctors cannot deal with it any more that legislation finally comes in. Let us deal with that straightaway.

I turn to the Public Sector bill. It has been said that this bill has been a long time coming. What a surprise! The Bridgman review was done three years ago, in 2019. The first stage reforms were implemented in 2020 and now we are another two years down the road. That is the Labor Party fast at work for you. It is no wonder that the dams and the hydro projects that they are talking about are surrounded by doubt and uncertainty and that no-one in the industry believes them. They cannot even get reforms, from a report from two years ago and over which they have total control, into this House in any quick time.

When this bill was put before the committee for investigation, one of the things that came up was the ECQ submission in relation to the oversight by the Public Sector Commission of the operations of the Electoral Commission of Queensland. Mr Vidgen is a well-regarded public servant. What did he say in that submission in relation to the powers? He said that the review powers under the bill are significantly more intrusive than current provisions and, in certain circumstances, granting powers to the minister or the Public Service to commence a public sector review could present a real or perceived threat to the ECQ's democracy.

Mr Vidgen went on to say that the ECQ was consulted by both the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the department of justice during the development of the bill. It was consulted but ignored, which is the normal trend for the Palaszczuk Labor government when they do not get the answer they want. When it was brought into public light and someone of Mr Vidgen's standing gave that evidence to the committee, what did the government do? They have said they have brought in

amendments. We will now have to deal with amendments that could have been dealt with already if the arrogant Palaszczuk Labor government had simply listened to the ECQ in the first place. Of course, we will support those amendments.

Having consulted and been ignored, it is only when public pressure is brought to bear that this government acts. It is the story time and time again with respect to this government. That is the only way they work.

I have heard many people speak about the treatment of the Public Service under the LNP government. I valued the public servants in the Treasury department. I valued the work they did and the support they gave. I made it my business every year to speak to them all. Let me tell members who did not respect the work the Public Service did: the Labor Party. I can remember Wendy Edmond, a health minister, coming into this place and saying that nurses were overeducated and complaining about collecting a chunder bucket. That is what the Labor Party think about nurses. They thought it in 2002. Then what did the Labor Party do?

Ms Enoch interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: I take that interjection from the member for Algeester. It did not pay them for 12 months and then denied that there was any problem—no pay, overpay, underpay, paying dead people. Then what did they do? They sent out the debt collectors. Remember that? They sent the debt collectors out in the dead of night to collect overpayments from people. We had the mealy-mouthed words from the now member for Woodridge, who apologised five years after the event for something that he and the government refused to admit any responsibility for. They tried it all the way through.

What did we do when we first came to office? The first thing we did was pay the nurses. Within 30 days the nurses had secured a 3½ per cent per year pay rise. They had been sitting on a wage negotiation for three years; we fixed it within 30 days. Those opposite cry crocodile tears—

Ms Farmer interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: I remember the member for Bulimba. She got the royal order of the boot from the electors there. We remember the university sports rorts affairs and Judy Spence when it comes to integrity—millions of dollars going to the University of Queensland—

Ms FARMER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence at the member's comments and ask him to withdraw.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Member for Nanango, I was taking a point of order. From here on in they will be heard in silence. Member for Clayfield, the member has taken personal offence and asks that you withdraw. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr NICHOLLS: I absolutely withdraw. I remember Judy Spence and the money that was paid. I remember the roles of the officers at the time who were part of it. I can go back further than that—

Ms FARMER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence and I ask that the member withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will take some advice, and I ask the House to come to order while I take that advice. There was no reference to the member personally. There is no point of order.

Mr POWER: With respect, I rise to a point of order. The member is not withdrawing if he continues the same sentence in the same terms. He has failed to withdraw if he continues the same argument about the same situation.

Mr O'Connor interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I do not need the assistance of the member for Bonney to deal with this point of order. I was listening to the contribution carefully. There is no point of order.

Mr NICHOLLS: This has a long history. This goes back to the history of the Labor Party—old 'Red Ted' Theodore and the Mungana mines affair, where he was found guilty of selling mines to the Queensland government at inflated prices. There is more. We remember the integrity of the former member for Bundamba, who had to resign as police minister. We remember the former member for Pumicestone, Rick Williams, whom the Premier held onto right until the dying day. I remember the former member for Bundaberg, a former agriculture minister, who did not pay her rates or car registration. We remember the member for Sandgate resigning as transport minister over the 'rail fail' affair. We remember that the member for Miller had to sit on the backbench for six months over the mangocube affair and only escaped because he did not have the gumption to actually delete things. He could not delete them properly. If he had of deleted them properly, he would have been found guilty of an offence.

I can go on. I remember the member for Bulimba's predecessor, Pat Purcell, who jobbed the fire executives and whom Peter Beattie gave the eyeball test to. Of course, I remember Robert Poole, the former member for Gaven, also known as the 'member for Bangkok' he was there so often. Then we had the granddaddy of them all, Gordon Nuttall. Who can forget?

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Member for Bulimba and member for Mudgeeraba, when you are occupying the positions of Acting Leader of the House and Acting Manager of Opposition Business you are afforded some latitude. You are also expected to hold yourself to a higher standard. You are both warned under the standing orders.

Mr NICHOLLS: The granddaddy of them all was Gordon Nuttall, and Peter Beattie reconvened parliament to change the laws to ensure it was no longer an offence to tell a fib to a parliamentary committee. I remember Keith Wright, the paedophile. Do members opposite remember him? They also held on to Bill D'Arcy until the death. I remember that. Then there was Merri Rose, the former minister for tourism, who was so interested in tourism that she gave her son the keys to the ministerial car so he could drive to Sydney and back again. Then she got punted by Peter Beattie. What did she come back and try to do? She tried to bribe him but got 18 months in the big house for it all.

We sit here listening to the Labor Party tell us about its integrity, but we do not need to look far to see their record. Their record of convictions is all we need to see—the court records of those who have done their time. Then we have the lesser offences: the Deputy Premier and the Lady Cilento name change affair—the minions in the office going 'tap, tap, tap, tap, tap' on the change of name.

When it comes to the Labor Party's record on integrity, I have barely scratched the surface. There was the Labor mayor of Ipswich—they all had their photo with him—Paul Pisasle. We remember Paul Pisasle. There was the Premier's chief of staff, Barbagallo, who escaped by the skin of his teeth. The Premier did not even look at his disclosure statements. Then we have the Premier herself, the only Premier found to be in contempt of this parliament. Then we have Anacta with Moorhead, Spinks, Milner and the conga line of other people who showed up at the door. I wish I had a lot more time, as we used to in the old days, but they changed the rules on that as well!

We will support this bill and we will support the amendments to be moved in relation to the magistrates as they make sense, but to be lectured to by the Labor Party on integrity is akin to letting Dracula control the blood bank. I will not have a bar of it and I will never let them forget.

(Time expired)