




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (6.13 pm): Finally we have a government not only delivering on election commitments but also doing an incredibly important thing for this state. It certainly makes a change, or maybe even a fresh start, for Queensland. Productivity might not be seen as important to some, but what does it actually mean? It is productivity that has delivered Australia its significant wealth, prosperity and the many luxuries that we get to enjoy. Without significant productivity in our state, we achieve next to nothing. If we cannot dig coal out of the ground in a productive way, there will be no coalmine and, in turn, no coal royalties. If we cannot fatten cattle productively, there will be no beef industry. If we cannot build roads productively, we might still get a road but it will take far too long and cost Queensland mum and dads—our taxpayers—far too much money. That is what we saw for the last 10 years under the former Labor government: productivity going down the gurgler and taxpayers coughing up to pay for it.

I am proud to stand here today and speak on this bill, the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024. This was a key election commitment the Crisafulli LNP government made as a tool to help get Queensland back on track after a decade of Labor's failures. It was Labor who abolished the previous productivity commission in 2021. Why did they get rid of it? It was because they did not like it having the ability to point out the significant list of Labor's policies and ministerial failures that were holding Queensland back. They did not like the commission criticising them, so they cut it. That is right: another Labor cut. As such, Queenslanders have been left without an independent analysis and investigatory powers for four long years, allowing organisations like the CFMEU to dictate policy and the construction industry to become incredibly unproductive.

Restoring the Productivity Commission will help secure the future prosperity of Queensland. Even the now Leader of the Opposition and other Labor members have previously agreed on the importance of the productivity commission. The member for Murrumba said in 2015 that the then productivity commission bill—

... reflects this government's commitment to excellence in policymaking and its commitment to both public consultation and expert advice.

I find that statement very funny, because I certainly did not see many of those points being made when he was the premier. I do strongly agree that this bill supports excellence in policymaking and also the LNP's commitment to re-establishing Queensland's economic growth and prosperity. It was a shame that the now Leader of the Opposition was then part of the government that proceeded to cut this service.

Productivity is the key to advancing Queensland and making it the powerhouse state that it should be. The Queensland Productivity Commissioner and his or her team will ensure the commission is independent, responsive, open and effective. Further to this, inquiries will be conducted in an open and

transparent manner. Despite the mistruths told by those opposite, this bill formalises the commission's independence from government, puts in place a corporate framework and will help restore the faith of Queenslanders in government, something they have not had for a very long time.

As previously mentioned, the first order of business for the Queensland Productivity Commission will be to conduct an inquiry into Queensland's building and construction industry, which continues to decline in productivity and growth. This is welcomed by the Master Builders Queensland, which in its submission referred to national labour productivity in the construction industry as being 18.1 per cent lower in the 2022-23 financial year than in the 2013-14 financial year. It also refers to union tactics and the need to offer protection to stakeholders in this process.

Last year, the CFMEU regularly made news headlines, with scandal after scandal and numerous dodgy dealings. Who are the CFMEU? They are the puppetmasters of many of those opposite, of course. We have seen many of the bullying tactics of the CFMEU being widely reported over recent years. I will be honest: why would a tradie in Queensland want to work for a small business and have to actually do something in a day? Instead, they could have been at a so-called BPIC site and sat around when conditions got evenly slightly uncomfortable—temperatures that are quite normal in Queensland, for instance—or because they do not particularly like their boss that day. They would also get paid significantly more than comparable jobs elsewhere, which sounds great—it is also a lot more than our hardworking nurses and teachers. Frankly, it created a false taxpayer-funded market, which we have seen all too often from the previous Labor government. I thank the Crisafulli LNP government for pausing BPIC because it was only holding Queensland back.

What are the local implications of a decade of chaos and crisis from Labor resulting in productivity going backwards? The Mundubbera-Durong Road has about 11 kilometres of single-lane bitumen. Widening these sections is my top priority for the electorate of Callide. It is incredibly important to the thousands in the communities of Mundubbera and Durong who rely on it. It is an access route between the Darling Downs and the North Burnett. During the election campaign I was with the member for Nanango, the now Attorney-General, talking about the importance of this road. The sections of the road that need upgrading are actually in the electorate of Nanango, but that road is an important link for communities in the electorate of Callide. The member for Nanango is as committed to fighting for this upgrade as I am.

One would think it would not cost too much to dual lane 11 kilometres of road. However, high level cost estimates suggest that it would currently cost in excess of \$50 million to upgrade this road. Short of a significant new industry or mineral deposit being discovered, it is hard to get that road upgrade to stack up at that price. Meanwhile, a productive construction sector in the civil space would help this project to stack up. Frankly, that cost is ludicrous. When talking to locals about the Mundubbera-Durong Road no-one can fathom why it would cost so much. That is the result of a decade of chaos and crisis and failures of the former Labor government.

I have already been talking to the minister about this issue and this project because every day I am in this House I will fight for the people and communities of Callide that keep this state going and provide food and fibre for our region and provide much prosperity through our mining industry.

Further, this road upgrade would also significantly improve productivity for producers in the North Burnett, providing much needed road train access to these communities. Road train access to the North Burnett would be a game changer for those communities. It would significantly decrease freight costs and, in turn, help those people in the south-east who get to eat some of the great produce and some of the great citrus, blueberries and grapes that come out of the North Burnett. It would decrease freight costs and, in turn, help ease the cost of living. Improving productivity in the state will help us build things more cost-effectively and that, in turn, will have a flow-on effect that helps the hip pocket of Queensland consumers, which is incredibly important at this time. This road upgrade is well overdue and I will not stop fighting until we see it upgraded.

Another significant upgrade that is well overdue and would contribute to productivity in Queensland is the upgrade needed of the Gladstone port access road. The former Labor government had \$100 million sitting on the table since 2019 that the former coalition government allocated. Since 2019 they had \$100 million sitting on the table to upgrade access to the Gladstone port. That is nearly six years because it was April 2019. Six years on, we have not seen any work done. That is due to the failures of the Labor government.

What we have seen with projects in Central Queensland is that they cannot offload at the port and send things up the road. They have to use the container handlers at the port and then they have to use a barge to take it elsewhere so it can be loaded onto a truck and sent around the long way. That is

bad for productivity and bad for Queensland. The former Labor government were given \$100 million to fix the problem and they did nothing. That is a disgrace. The member for Gladstone, who is the local member, sat around the cabinet table and was part of the decision-making. We have not seen any construction. We have many failures from the former Labor government.

Increasing productivity in Queensland will, in turn, put downward pressure on prices, increase wages and raise profits for businesses and industry. This commission is incredibly important. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Member for Callide, you talked about what the member for Murrumba said in the 2015 debate. The member for Murrumba at that time was me. The Leader of the Opposition was the member for Mount Coot-tha at that time. You might want to look at correcting that later, if needs be.