




Speech By
Hon. David Janetzki

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL

 **Hon. DC JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Minister for Home Ownership) (7.44 pm), in reply: Mr Deputy Speaker, let's be productive now and pass the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill. I thank those members who have provided their support for the bill, including the Deputy Premier. I am privileged to be the Treasurer who restores the independent Productivity Commission to Queensland.

The role of the Productivity Commission will be integral to leading policy development that drives better outcomes for Queenslanders because productivity underwrites prosperity, and we must return it to Queensland to drive down costs across industry and around the kitchen table. After a decade of stagnation under Labor Queensland cannot afford to kick the can down the road any longer on productivity, which is why the Crisafulli government has acted.

The debate before the House on this bill highlights the opposition's efforts to undermine and downplay the independence of the commission. Let me be clear: the commission will be independent. The government will not have the capacity to direct the commission on the contents of its advice, findings or recommendations. The commission will provide independent advice to government, but its success will be dependent on that advice being focused on priority issues that help inform the government's consideration of key policy issues that are important to Queenslanders. Therefore, the commission will not have the power to initiate public inquiries independent of government direction; however, it will have the power to put proposals to government to undertake its own self-generated analysis of the issues at hand.

Constituting the Queensland Productivity Commission as a statutory body ensures that the Productivity Commission will be independent from government, and this independence will be enshrined in legislation. Any changes to the roles, functions and institutional features of the entity will require the amendment of legislation and therefore be open to parliamentary scrutiny.

In my opening remarks, I emphasised the importance of productivity as the main driver of living standards and highlighted the poor productivity performance in Queensland over the last several years. The Crisafulli government is committed to taking the actions needed to lift Queensland's productivity, support business activity and drive income growth, enhance government services, and ensure the delivery of our government's housing and infrastructure priorities. This bill is an important part of that commitment.

I now want to turn to some of the contributions that have been made during the debate. Several members have spoken today about the importance of productivity to the Queensland economy. Members on this side of the House have highlighted how the lack of productivity under 10 years of Labor is limiting our economy, holding back our powerhouse industries and hurting households. They have detailed how the state needs its own Productivity Commission to secure our future prosperity. We need to cut unnecessary regulatory imposts, encourage creativity and innovation, and build a highly skilled Public Service to deliver more and better services. Members have told us about how they want

to restore the Productivity Commission because it is long overdue to restore respect for taxpayers' money in Queensland, drive down the cost of living, improve housing affordability, and ensure access to reliable and affordable services. Colleagues have highlighted the work the Productivity Commission will undertake, and I thank them for it.

It is important to remember that the first brief and referral to the Productivity Commission is to conduct a comprehensive review of the building and construction industry. The commission will also deliver Queensland's first intergenerational equity report, outlining key issues that Queenslanders experience across the generations and consequently develop long-term solutions. The Productivity Commission's independence is crucial to its effectiveness and the provision of independent advice plays an important role in effective policymaking. The commission will be a critical tool in ensuring that Queensland remains a place of opportunity, growth and prosperity.

While it is obvious that this Productivity Commission will benefit all Queenslanders, opposition members have tried to criticise it, mainly out of ignorance. I think today in particular about the contributions of the member for Pine Rivers and the member for Aspley. I had almost forgotten they were ministers of the Crown in the former government, they were both so ineffective.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kempton): Members to my left, I know it is probably quite important but could you keep the chatter down, please.

Mr JANETZKI: They failed to be productive in their portfolios at the time. To be honest, the only contribution I remember the member for Aspley ever making was to sign off on cost blowout after cost blowout—the very antithesis of the kind of productivity we want to restore to Queensland.

I refer to the contribution to the debate from the member for Waterford, the shadow treasurer. I really need to ask the shadow treasurer whether she in fact put a search into ChatGPT to come up with her Productivity Commission speech. After regurgitating what appeared to be an AI summary of productivity, the shadow treasurer seemed to fall back on a year 9 economics class in what she had to say about productivity in Queensland. It sounded suspiciously like a ChatGPT search result. I am just going to pull out a couple of quotes, because I had to go and read the speech after I listened to the shadow treasurer speak. She said—

... we know that the Productivity Commission will be controlled entirely by the Treasurer, who will have the power to dictate what it investigates and what research it undertakes and, just as importantly, what it does not.

She said—

... the bill does not allow the commission to independently conduct published research without the approval of the minister and, further, allows the minister to amend the research proposal.

Like the year 9 economics class that the shadow treasurer appeared not to have listened to, she has fundamentally misunderstood the bill and what it seeks to achieve. The bill clearly states that the Queensland Productivity Commission will be able to undertake research into economic and social issues, regulatory matters or legislation on its own initiative. That is something ChatGPT could not tell the shadow treasurer. That is something ChatGPT could not deliver. She did not put it in the search.

Dr Rowan interjected.

Mr JANETZKI: It did not read the bill. For the shadow treasurer's benefit, the research or analysis and any report produced by the Productivity Commission based on that research or analysis will still be undertaken and prepared independently. Importantly, the research or analysis cannot be about the content of any advice or recommendation given by the commission. On another point of confusion for the shadow treasurer, she stated—

Unlike the federal Productivity Commission, there is no requirement for this body to table reports in parliament—none—and any work the commission initiates on its own can only be published with the Treasurer's approval and there is absolutely no parliamentary oversight.

What ChatGPT could have told the shadow treasurer but has clearly not is what is stated in the bill—that is, that the QPC would be required to publish an inquiry report on its website as soon as practicable following receipt of the minister's response to that report, thus enabling public scrutiny of said report. The shadow treasurer really needs to do a bit more than plug in a ChatGPT search and expect what comes out the other end to constitute enough subject matter to one day be treasurer of Queensland. The shadow treasurer cannot just plug in ChatGPT searches and expect the kind of analysis that ought to be brought to the serious role that she now holds.

This is the same as what was required under the previous Queensland productivity commission. There is no requirement for QPC reports to be tabled under this bill. This is exactly the same as under the previous Labor government's Queensland Productivity Commission Act from 2015, which also did not require QPC reports or the government responses to be tabled in parliament. The bill only requires the Queensland Productivity Commission to seek the Treasurer's approval for self-initiated research it intends to publish. Once the research proposal is approved, the Treasurer's approval is not required for the QPC to publish the resulting report.

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Mr JANETZKI: You are going to have to do better, shadow treasurer.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, I will not have shouting at each other across the floor, please.

Mr JANETZKI: The member for McConnell posed a question. She asked—

If they are going to be doing exactly the same work as the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction, why do they need to be transferred out of Treasury?

That was the member for McConnell. It is a simple answer. The QPC has broader functions than the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction, including conducting public inquiries, which is not part of the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction's work. The new Productivity Commission, just like its predecessor, will have powers to require information from government agencies in order to conduct inquiries and research. These are powers that the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction does not have.

The reason for moving the Productivity Commission outside of Treasury is also simple. Our government was committed to making the commission independent and moving it back outside government agencies after the former Labor government moved it there to bring it under their political control. The member for McConnell rightly pointed out that clause 38(3) of the bill says that the Treasurer cannot dictate to the Productivity Commission what they write. Thank goodness for that. The member for McConnell also said—

They want to put a clause in the legislation which almost says, 'If you write a report—guess what?—you are free to write it.'

That is exactly right, member for McConnell. I could not have said it better myself.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr JANETZKI: I take the interjection from the member for McConnell. Maybe the member for McConnell should be the shadow treasurer, because we know that the member for McConnell would not need a ChatGPT search; she could probably draw on her Harvard days studying. She could probably draw on her Harvard experiences rather than ChatGPT, like the shadow treasurer has tonight. I thank the member for McConnell for completely agreeing with our position, because the provision that the member for McConnell referred to clearly demonstrates the independence of the Queensland Productivity Commission's advice.

Importantly, the research or analysis and any report produced by the Queensland Productivity Commission based on that research or analysis will still be undertaken and prepared independently. Any direction by the Treasurer cannot be about the content of any advice or recommendation made by the commission. This is a common approach, and the former government's legislation had a similar provision when it established the former Queensland productivity commission in 2015—back when they at least pretended to care about productivity, households and the cost of living.

The member for Bancroft also said that the QPC could replace or shunt aside some of the work of a parliamentary committee. I can reassure the member that the work of the Queensland Productivity Commission has no impact on the responsibilities or role of parliamentary committees, which are determined by standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly made under the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. The bill does not in any way override the standing orders. The member for Bancroft also seemed very concerned about the time it would take for the Productivity Commission to release its inquiry reports. He said—

All the commission needs to do is publish it on a website three months after the Treasurer has sat on that report.

Let me again reassure the member that the bill requires that the minister must respond to inquiry reports within three months of receiving a report from the Productivity Commission and that the Productivity Commission must publish the report on the Productivity Commission's website following receipt of the minister's response. This contrasts with the previous Queensland Productivity Commission Act, established by the former Labor government, which allowed the minister six months

to respond to a report. Surely that is a dreadful prospect for the member for Bancroft. Once they receive the minister's report, the Productivity Commission is then required to publish the report on their website, which is the same as the requirement under the Queensland Productivity Commission Act. In a final bid to provide some peace of mind and assurance for the member for Bancroft, I will remind him of his words in 2015 when he said—

The Productivity Commission will provide independent economic and policy advice to the state with the goal of increasing productivity as well as improving the living standards of Queenslanders and driving economic growth.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr JANETZKI: No. He said—

We have to keep looking for productivity gains and see where they can be made, and that is why the Queensland Productivity Commission will be so important.

I have checked, member for Bancroft. Don't worry: they were the honourable member's words. The member for Bulimba shared that view back in 2015 when she said—

I think we all agreed that it was important to establish an independent economic advisory body ...

That was the member for Bulimba. It is great to see support from the member for Bulimba. The Leader of the Opposition also seemed to agree back in 2015. He said—

... the Queensland Productivity Commission will provide a vital service for the government and the state.

I also should note the words of former treasurer Curtis Pitt, who in fact instituted the productivity commission back in 2015 and who believed in it. He said—

... governments should seek new productivity gains in order to protect economic growth and living standards. The Queensland Productivity Commission is intended to be a key mechanism in that respect.

But it was too productive. In the first year or two there were seven reviews, then four reviews, and over time the replacement treasurer to Curtis Pitt starved the productivity commission out of its existence. It was Jackie. It was Jackie Trad. It was Jackie that starved the productivity commission out of its existence over the years. In fact, in 2020 the productivity commission released the review into regulatory gains. In 2021 they released a review into regulatory reform, which was the final review. It is telling that the final review of the productivity commission, as previously constituted under the Labor government, was a review into regulatory reform. That review found that regulatory imposts on Queensland businesses topped at the upper end \$7 billion per annum—\$7 billion per annum on business expenses. That was the last review. They heard that and the other reviews that were coming through and they were like, 'Enough! Enough! We can't bear any more of this truth. We have to shut this down and bring it back under the control of the member for Woodridge.' That is what they did. They firstly starved it of its existence and then when they got the final review, they were like, 'Oh, can't handle this. There is too much truth for us.' That review found that the impost to business was up to \$7 billion per year. There were 72,400 pages of regulatory burden across the state. There was an explosion in regulatory reform.

The former government starved the productivity commission, as we see it today, out of existence. It is telling that during the course of this debate over the last sitting week and this sitting week the former treasurer never even spoke. He never even spoke. He rolled it back into the bureaucracy in 2021, in a larger bill, and today he has not even bothered to speak. We know what they think about the productivity commission. We watched them. We watched them starve it out of existence. We watched them ignore its recommendations. We watched them not just ignore the recommendations but run from them. They ran from them.

I have to comment on the member for Miller. I was reading the statement of reservation. The opposition members of the committee said the Productivity Commission will be like a hammer in my hands. The member for Miller was not paying attention. He has been reading night-time fairy tales or something because he is talking about Chihuahuas and tamed cats and little lambs. What are you talking about, member for Miller? What are you talking about on the Productivity Commission Bill? Seriously!

A government member interjected.

Mr JANETZKI: I will take the interjection. You are not on Twitter anymore, member for Miller. What are you talking about? Whatever flight of fancy the member for Miller was on, those opposite, in the statement of reservation, said the Productivity Commission would be like a hammer in my hands. They said 'as a hammer to inquire into any aspect of Queensland life'. After everything I have had to say about the independence, the dedication to rigour and the solutions that we need to deliver—better

cost of living, better infrastructure delivery and better housing delivery for our state—those opposite said, ‘It will be a hammer in the hands of the Treasurer, controlled by the Treasurer, doing as the Treasurer commands.’

If those opposite want to say this commission will be a hammer, let it be a hammer that builds homes for the people that those opposite left homeless, left sleeping in cars, in tents and under bridges. Let it be the hammer that builds infrastructure on time and on budget. Let it be that hammer after those opposite squandered their decade in office. If those opposite want to say that I will use this commission as a hammer, let it be the hammer which will put the final nail in the coffin of Labor’s culture of project mismanagement and cost overruns.

Let me say this: I will take a hammer that builds housing, infrastructure and service delivery over a hammer and sickle. I will take that hammer any day of the week. I commend the bill to the House.