




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

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QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL

 **Ms MORTON** (Caloundra—LNP) (12.04 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill—an essential legislative step to restore accountability, efficiency and economic growth to our great state. I would like to acknowledge that ‘productivity’ is not a dirty word. Productivity is a fantastic concept that has benefit to each and every single Queenslander. This bill is a direct response to the failures of former governments which systematically dismantled the very mechanisms assigned to ensure Queensland’s prosperity.

Let’s be clear: Labor’s decision to abolish the Queensland productivity commission in 2021 was a calculated move to eliminate independent oversight and suppress transparency. This was not an innocent restructuring but a deliberate act to conceal their failures in managing Queensland’s economy. Under their leadership, productivity declined, government waste soared and Queenslanders were left asking: where did all the money go? They are still asking that question.

In 2015, when the commission was first established, even Labor acknowledged its value. The now Leader of the Opposition in a rare moment of clarity described it as a ‘vital service’ for the government and the state. Yet, despite those acknowledgements, Labor systematically defunded, ignored and ultimately abolished the commission—an act of policy vandalism that has cost Queenslanders dearly.

The facts speak for themselves. Between 2016 and 2021 Labor referred a mere seven matters to the commission, rendering it ineffective before finally shutting it down. They then had the audacity to claim that its functions would be performed inside government agencies—a thinly veiled excuse for moving vital economic assessments behind closed doors away from scrutiny and accountability.

The consequences of economic mismanagement are staggering. A 2020 report by the Queensland productivity commission itself highlighted that productivity had declined under Labor’s watch since 2015. Had productivity growth remained at pre-2018 levels, Queensland’s real per capita income could have been \$11,000 higher in 2023-24. Instead, thanks to these failures, Queenslanders have experienced, over a decade, lower wages, higher unemployment and raising inflation.

The construction and utilities industries—key pillars of our economy—have been particularly affected, experiencing minimal productivity growth over the past three decades. While the broader market sector grew since as far back as 1994-95, these industries lagged behind at just 17 per cent. This stagnation is directly attributable to Labor’s indifference and incompetence, driving up costs for businesses and worsening the housing affordability crisis.

We can simplify this in two main ways. First, productivity is something that affects all Queenslanders in their overall livability. I will say that again: productivity is something that affects all Queenslanders in their overall livability. Productivity is something that is so critical to the way this state functions. How? It is because, when the productivity rate remains stagnant and wages costs are driven

higher, companies are forced to increase their prices. The mismatch between the wages growth rate and the productivity rate while they continue to exist in mismatch is a reason Queenslanders are in a cost-of-living crisis as it is a driver of inflation.

Second, Queenslanders want and are demanding to know why everything is costing so much. These are very simple questions that Queenslanders are asking: why is it taking so much longer and why is it costing so much more? The Productivity Commission will exist to find out why. In Caloundra I have spoken to builders who have explicitly stated that it is taking twice as long to build anything. What used to take six months is now taking 12 months. They cite many reasons for this. From an individual, real-life, real-world example, having a conversation—what a concept!—many of those reasons could be from red tape to work sites being shut down due to puddles, to over-regulation or to systematic failures of processes that dictate to industry.

Unlike Labor, the Crisafulli government takes its responsibility to Queenslanders seriously. In 2022 we made a commitment to restore the Queensland Productivity Commission, and today we deliver on that promise. This bill will ensure that Queensland once again has an independent body dedicated to identifying and driving productivity improvements across industries and government services without political interference. The restored Queensland Productivity Commission will not be the token advisory body it became under Labor. It will operate with true independence, free from manipulation. Its primary objectives will be to cut red tape, streamline regulation and deliver cost-saving measures that benefit businesses and consumers alike. Queenslanders deserve better, and this bill is a crucial step towards reversing the damage.

This bill enshrines in law the fundamental principles of transparency, efficiency and independence. The commission will function as a statutory body, ensuring it is not beholden to political influence. It will be led by a full-time Queensland Productivity Commissioner with the power to appoint additional commissioners as required. Its inquiries will be conducted through an open, transparent process with full public consultation, ensuring its findings cannot be buried or manipulated. The Treasurer may refer matters to the commission but, crucially, cannot dictate the content of its reports. This is an explicit safeguard against the kind of interference Labor has engaged in for many years.

The first order of business for the commission will be a comprehensive inquiry into productivity challenges within the building and construction industry. Years of Labor neglect and bureaucratic red tape have hampered this critical sector, driving up costs and exacerbating Queensland's housing crisis. This inquiry will provide actionable recommendations to increase efficiency, reduce costs and ensure that critical infrastructure projects are delivered on time and within budget—unlike the countless cost blowouts and delays characterised by the last government.

Additionally, the commission will prepare an intergenerational equity report, ensuring that future generations are not burdened by the reckless economic policies of past Labor governments. This forward-thinking approach will help secure long-term economic stability—something that has not been delivered for a very long time. Key industry stakeholders have voiced strong support for the re-establishment of the Queensland Productivity Commission. Business Chamber Queensland describes it as essential to economic reform in Queensland. The Property Council confirmed that the bill provides the necessary framework for robust independent economic analysis.

Predictably, the opposition resorted to misleading claims in a desperate attempt to justify past failures. They argue that the commission will be accountable only to the LNP Treasurer, but this is patently false. Labor also falsely claims that the commission will overstep its advisory role and dictate government policy. This is an outright distortion. The commission will provide independent expert analysis—nothing more, nothing less. Policy decisions will remain the prerogative of the elected government, as they always have, in a much more informed, responsible way. Honourable members, the choice before us today is clear. Do we allow Queensland to continue down the path of economic stagnation, red tape and government inefficiency—the path we have been forced onto for the best part of a decade—or do we take decisive action to restore productivity, cut waste and ensure a prosperous future for all Queenslanders? The Crisafulli government chooses the latter.

With this bill we reaffirm our commitment to accountability, transparency and economic growth. We will not allow Labor's past failures to dictate our future. Queenslanders deserve better, business owners deserve better, consumers deserve better, people who want to buy their own home deserve better and families deserve better. With the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024 we will deliver better livability for all Queenslanders. I commend this bill to the House.