




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

Record of Proceedings, 20 February 2025

QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (8.05 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill. Speaking of bills, this is the second bill that we have debated this sitting week. If we consider that we are talking about productivity, it is Thursday night and we are only a couple of speakers deep into the speaking list on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill—what a delicious irony. When this bill passes the parliament, as it undoubtedly will when the government uses its numbers, perhaps the first thing that the Queensland Productivity Commission could look into is the legislative program of this LNP government because it is pretty bare at the moment.

This LNP version of a productivity commission absolutely should be a matter of concern for all Queenslanders. It is very different to the productivity commissions that exist federally and in other states and territories. It differs from all the other productivity commissions because it is not truly independent and it is not truly accountable to anyone other than the LNP Treasurer of Queensland who would assume new powers through the commission to inquire into a very broad range of matters including the lives of Queenslanders. Given the broad scope that this bill contains, almost any aspect of Queenslanders' lives could be inquired into if the Productivity Commission is set up as is proposed in the bill that the government has brought before the House. That means that the LNP commission would, in fact, move beyond giving advice to being an active participant in setting and implementing the government's policy agenda.

Mr Vorster: Hear, hear!

Mr McCALLUM: That is the first of many instances where it fails the test of independence. I take the interjection of the member who said, 'Hear, hear!' when I said that it would move beyond providing advice into being an active participant in setting and implementing the government's agenda.

Mr Vorster interjected.

Mr McCALLUM: He has done it again. I am glad that that is on the record. I hope that the Treasurer will refer to it when he sums up so he can explain why a member of his government thinks that supporting that proposition is not somehow undercutting the independence that this commission purportedly has.

We have heard other speakers say that the first task of this political plaything of the LNP government will be to attack the wages and conditions of ordinary Queensland workers in the building and construction industry. To that I say, 'Shame.' This commission will not be independent. It will not be transparent. It will not be accountable; it will only be accountable to the LNP Treasurer, who will be able to control and command the Queensland Productivity Commission. There will be no real accountability. There will be the facade of accountability but there will be no actual independence or accountability.

This is something that stakeholders and witnesses brought up during the committee process. Stakeholders such as the Business Chamber of Queensland and the Queensland Renewable Energy Council stated that they believed there is a need for established transparency and independence. The Queensland Council of Unions also made a submission to the—

Mr Crandon: This should be worthwhile hearing.

Mr McCALLUM: Absolutely. I take the interjection from the member for Coomera, who obviously needs to listen to it again. Perhaps this time the member for Coomera might learn something. Whilst I live in hope, I doubt it.

The member for Caloundra asked whether or not a department which sits in Treasury needed to be more independent and whether the Productivity Commission would not offer more independence. Mr Nate Tosh, the officer from the QCU, provided a response which absolutely schooled the member for Caloundra and established the utter nonsense of the facade of independence that surrounds this bill. Mr Tosh said—

Are public servants not bound by their code of conduct to be independent? If they are not, they can be found to be in breach of the code of conduct. It says they have to be. As a good public servant, they must be independent. They must provide frank and fearless advice. I believe that is what this government expects and what it has said repeatedly, so I would expect that departments would be.

Hear, hear! Let the sun shine in.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kempton): Members!

Mr McCALLUM: They bellow, 'It needs to be accountable. It needs to be independent.' The Labor Treasurer—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let's try again, shall we?

Mr McCALLUM: When the independent Productivity Commission, established in 2015, was brought within Treasury, we still received independent advice. I will move on because, unfortunately, my time is running short.

I want to make a few quick remarks in relation to a couple of contributions—one from the member for Coomera and one from the member for Theodore. I think another member was quoting a productivity dip in Queensland between 2018 and 2022-23. I wonder what happened during those years. Perhaps there was a global pandemic that might have impacted our economy. By the way, Queensland's economy did extremely well—we led the nation and led the world—as we came through the pandemic. When talking about cherry-picking data and spinning it, that has to be the worst example ever.

The commission has a very broad remit. I am concerned that this LNP think tank of a productivity commission will undermine and undercut the work of truly independent organisations such as the Auditor-General, who is an officer of this parliament. I hope that does not come to pass, but I suspect there is a real risk.

The Productivity Commission will be able to look into any aspect of our lives. For example, it might look into our recovery from natural disasters. Perhaps this independent commission could work with the former member for Hinchinbrook, Andrew Cripps, in his new role as the State Recovery Coordinator. If it looks into workplace health and safety, it could work with the former member for Burleigh, Michael Hart, in his new role. If it looks into energy, it could work with former deputy premier Jeff Seeney. It is not independent. They will stack it with their LNP mates, just like they have been. Talk about productivity—they give jobs to their mates.