




Speech By
Martin Hunt

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

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QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL

 **Mr HUNT** (Nicklin—LNP) (7.55 pm): I rise tonight to speak in strong support of the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024—a crucial piece of legislation that will reinstate the Queensland Productivity Commission as an independent statutory body. This bill ensures that the commission operates with full independence from government and is empowered to conduct formal public inquiries, reviews and investigations into complex economic and social issues, regulatory matters and legislation.

The re-establishment of the commission was a commitment made during the 2024 Queensland state election, reflecting the government's dedication to fostering economic growth and improving living standards across Queensland. This bill sets out the commission's core functions, governance framework and appointment process for commissioners, ensuring its effectiveness in delivering high-quality, independent research and policy advice.

The Queensland Productivity Commission was originally introduced by Labor in 2015 during the first term of the Palaszczuk government. It was established as an independent economic advisory body with the broad objective of improving productivity, conducting inquiries and providing expert recommendations on complex economic and social issues. At the time its creation was widely supported within the government, with the now Leader of the Opposition, Steven Miles, saying—

I rise to speak in support of the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill ... It reflects this government's commitment to excellence in policymaking and its commitment to both public consultation and expert advice.

In its early years the commission played a key role in investigating critical economic matters, including electricity prices, service delivery in remote Indigenous communities and improving regulatory frameworks. It demonstrated its value as a tool for evidence-based policy development. However, despite its early contributions, the commission gradually lost relevance under successive Labor governments. Between 2016 and 2021 only seven matters were referred for review, a stark contrast to its initial active years. Ultimately, in 2021, the then treasurer and member for Woodridge made the decision to abolish the commission, arguing that its work could instead be undertaken within government agencies.

Mr Lister: Under the control of the treasurer!

Mr HUNT: I will take that interjection: under the control of the treasurer.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kempton): Members, I would like to hear from the member for Nicklin, not the rest of you, thank you.

Mr HUNT: This move effectively ended the commission's role as an independent body, stripping Queensland of an institution dedicated to rigorous economic analysis and policy recommendations. Notably, in 2020 the commission released a report highlighting that productivity had declined under Labor's tenure since 2015. This report underscored the critical link between productivity and economic

outcomes, reinforcing why Queensland needs a dedicated, independent commission to guide policy decisions. The former commission's abolition meant that Queensland lost a valuable source of independent advice at a time when productivity concerns were becoming increasingly pressing.

The decision to disband the commission was a short-sighted one. Many of the same leaders who once championed the commission's creation ultimately abandoned it, yet the need for independent expert economic advice has not diminished. In fact, it has become more crucial as Queensland seeks to strengthen its economy and improve long-term prosperity. The commission's work will be vital in addressing key economic and social challenges that impact Queenslanders. Its inquiries will involve extensive stakeholder consultation, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered and rigorously tested. The commission's recommendations will be independent, evidence based and capable of significantly contributing to the policy development process. By engaging with businesses, community organisations and industry leaders, the commission will provide crucial insights to shape future economic and social policy.

Beyond formal inquiries, the commission will provide research and advice to the minister on key economic and social issues. It will have the ability to initiate its own research into productivity and regulatory matters, subject to ministerial approval for publication. This ensures that Queensland remains at the forefront of best practice in economic policy in governance. Furthermore, the commission will have the ability to advise on issues that impact Queensland's long-term economic sustainability, including employment trends, industry shifts and innovation.

The people of Nicklin stand to benefit greatly from the commission's work. Our region is home to a diverse mix of industries, including agriculture, tourism, construction, manufacturing and small business. By addressing regulatory inefficiencies, fostering economic productivity and identifying barriers to growth, the commission will support policies that enhance job creation and long-term economic stability in our community. The potential for increased productivity will directly benefit small businesses, entrepreneurs and local industries, ensuring they have the tools and support needed to thrive in a rapidly changing economy.

Additionally, the bill enables the commission to administer, monitor and review regulatory matters as directed by the minister. This includes assessing the effectiveness of the Queensland government's regulatory impact analysis system and regulatory performance framework. By ensuring that regulations are effective without being burdensome, the commission will help create an environment where businesses can thrive, investment can grow and communities can prosper. This is particularly critical for regions such as Nicklin where red tape has historically impacted a business's ability to expand and compete effectively. In particular, the construction industry, which is essential to the continued growth of our state, has experienced little to no productivity growth over the past 30 years. According to Treasury analysis of ABS data, those industries have grown by only 17 per cent since 1994-95 compared to 64 per cent in the broader market sector. This disparity underscores the need for a dedicated body to investigate, assess and implement policies that will drive efficiency, drive competitiveness and drive job creation in this key sector.

Productivity is not an abstract economic concept. It has real-world implications for every Queenslander. Weak productivity growth leads to lower wages, slower economic expansion and higher inflation. Had productivity growth remained at its pre-2018 average, Queensland's real per capita income could have been \$11,000 higher in 2023-24. That is money that could have gone towards housing, education, small business investments or everyday household expenses. This bill seeks to rectify those shortcomings by ensuring that productivity growth is a key priority in shaping future economic policy.

Importantly, while the commission's role will remain advisory, its research and analysis will serve as a critical resource for policymakers. Its recommendations will be based on thorough objective assessments, ensuring that policy decisions are backed by evidence rather than speculation or short-term political considerations. This will lead to more sustainable impactful policies that benefit Queensland in the long term. This is an opportunity to support a stronger, more productive Queensland. By passing this bill, we will affirm our commitment to accountability, efficiency and economic progress. I commend the bill to the House.