




Speech By
Hon. Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL

 **Hon. RM BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training) (4.06 pm): I rise in support of the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024, which is yet another example of the Crisafulli LNP government delivering a fresh start for Queenslanders in line with our plan at the election. In our 100-day plan we committed to introducing this very legislation to re-establish the Queensland Productivity Commission. The Queensland Productivity Commission was, of course, abolished by the member for Woodridge in 2021. What a legacy for the member for Woodridge. He took a valuable initiative that was providing, in the words of his boss, the member for Murrumba, 'a vital service for the government and the state' and cut it. He was out of his depth and out of ideas, but what else would Queenslanders expect from a Labor government that was characterised by crisis and chaos.

Under those opposite productivity went backwards, in particular in the building industry which was saddled with the CFMEU tax as part of a sweetheart deal with their union paymasters. This government has paused the Best Practice Industry Conditions: the CFMEU tax. Just as we promised, the first order of business for the Productivity Commission will be a regulatory review of the building industry. The restoration of the Queensland Productivity Commission will help to drive initiatives to ease cost-of-living pressures, deliver high-quality services for Queenslanders and build the housing infrastructure our state so desperately needs after a decade of neglect under Labor.

As a government we are working calmly and methodically to deliver a fresh start for Queensland, including by increasing capacity and productivity across the public sector, including our government owned corporations. Productivity is an important topic for all Queenslanders. As a government committed to treating Queensland taxpayer funds with respect, improved productivity will ensure value for taxpayers' money. Further, improved productivity through reducing red tape and regulatory burdens will reduce costs for both Queenslanders and Queensland businesses.

Regulatory reform is critical to improving productivity in this state. The statistics around the prevalence of red tape in Queensland are truly staggering. As of the last assessment—which was in 2022, so these numbers have inevitably only continued to worsen under Labor's chaos and crisis—Queensland had more than 120,000 regulatory restrictions in place. No wonder businesses could not get ahead under Labor. They were spending all their time and money trying to figure out what regulations they needed to comply with. Estimates from 2021, which have not been adjusted for inflation—which only make these figures even more shocking—reveal that Queensland businesses were saddled with compliance costs in the realm of \$3.5 billion to \$7 billion per year. More than that, it was estimated that the wider economic costs of burdensome regulations were likely to be at least double those figures under those opposite—at least double!

It is hardly surprising that Queensland Labor, which oversaw a litany of budget blowouts and black holes under the member for Woodridge, the member for Murrumba and the member for Waterford, was responsible for such a proliferation in red tape, shackling Queensland productivity, workers and businesses. Those opposite have form in this space. Queenslanders will not soon forget the CFMEU

tax, introduced by Labor, which cost Queensland taxpayers up to 30 per cent extra on major projects across the state because those opposite were beholden to their union puppetmasters. It is not as if Queensland Labor had the money to spare on those projects in the first instance, as we have now seen. Most projects were not properly funded or were subject to the most disgraceful cost blowouts in yet another example of the complete lack of regard the member for Woodridge and his Labor colleagues had for Queenslanders' hard-earned money.

Queenslanders will never forgive and never forget that those opposite saddled this state with an estimated \$218 billion in debt by 2028. Those opposite were willing to say and do anything to be re-elected, and thank goodness Queenslanders saw through that facade. In that vein, Queenslanders will not forget the project blowouts—not the total costs but the cost escalations—overseen by the member for Woodridge, the member for Murrumba, the member for Waterford and their Queensland Labor mates. By way of example: a \$11.6 billion cost blowout on Cross River Rail, a \$24.77 billion cost blowout on the Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro scheme, a \$4.2 billion cost blowout on the Borumba Pumped Hydro project and a \$2.8 billion cost blowout on CopperString. That is only a small excerpt of the cost blowouts at the hands of Queensland Labor and just another example of their disgraceful disregard for the hard-earned money of each and every Queenslanders.

Conversely, Queenslanders have seen the Crisafulli LNP government take a calm and methodical approach as we begin the process of cleaning up Labor's mess: delivering budget improvements, respecting hard-earned taxpayer money and ensuring that funding is available for essential public services and infrastructure—unlike those opposite, who cannot govern themselves or Queensland. We are already seeing the benefits of this fresh approach, with renewed confidence from our international trade partners and investors who know that Queensland is now open for business and has at the helm a government that is dedicated to stability, transparency and growth that will ultimately deliver new opportunities for Queensland jobs and industries.

Given the significant impacts of the former Queensland Labor government's overzealous regulation, it should be no surprise that we have seen widespread support for the reintroduction of the Productivity Commissioner from businesses and organisations across the state. During the committee process, Canegrowers Cairns Region submitted—

The cane industry has been and continues to be impacted by red tape, regulations, and legislation. This has been extremely frustrating to sugar producers ...

The Australian Constructors Association welcomed the bill, noting—

As Queensland seeks to plan for its future and improve the living standards of Queenslanders, understanding the opportunities to improve productivity must be a priority. The re-establishment of the Commission, with the ability to conduct formal public inquiries, reviews and investigations into complex economic and social matters will contribute to this.

Organisations such as the Property Council of Australia and Master Builders Queensland also welcomed the restoration of the Productivity Commission. The Property Council of Australia observed—

As drafted, the legislation provides sufficient powers and structures for the QPC to undertake robust and independent analysis of economic and related issues impacting Queensland.

Master Builders Queensland indicated their support of the commission's focus on the building and construction industry, noting that it 'provides a solution to positively address our industry's decline in productivity for the benefit of Queensland's economy'.

I know that businesses and investors across Queensland will gain great confidence through this practical and sensible approach to regulation, removing unnecessary and burdensome regulations, refining existing regulations and improving regulation administration and enforcement. Restoring the Productivity Commission is not the end of our efforts to improve productivity in Queensland. We know that Queensland's economic and industry development is reliant on improvements to our state's productivity levels. Further, we know that increasing productivity will put downward pressure on prices for all Queenslanders, increase wages and raise profits for business and industry.

Within my portfolio, the Crisafulli LNP government is working to ensure strategic investments are made to support TAFE and other vocational training providers in order to address Queensland's critical skilled worker shortage as an early approach to improving Queensland's productivity. More generally under the Crisafulli LNP government Queensland is open for business, and the restoration of the Queensland Productivity Commission is another example of the practical initiatives that our government is championing to drive positive change in this state and fix the mess left by Queensland Labor. The passage of this bill is reflective of a government that is laser focused on delivering for all Queenslanders, and the restoration of the Queensland Productivity Commission sees another LNP election commitment delivered. I commend the bill to the House.