




Speech By
Hon. Steve Minnikin
MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

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QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL

 **Hon. SJ MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business) (4.20 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill. Before I do, I echo the sentiment of members in the chamber who have expressed their well wishes to the member for Macalister. Like many members on this side of the chamber, I was not aware of the seriousness of her health issue until I read about it in the weekend's press. I wish her all the very best and a very speedy recovery. Politics is a pretty tough game but, at the end of the day, I believe issues such as this transcend the political divide. I wish her all the very best.

Introducing the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill, as has been outlined by many speakers before me, was an LNP commitment ahead of the 2024 state election. It was something that the then shadow treasurer, now proudly Treasurer, made sure was front and centre of his contribution in the lead-up to the campaign and now we have the bill before the House.

The core business of the commission, as has been pointed out, will be to conduct formal public reviews and investigations into complex economic and social issues, regulatory matters and legislation. This bill aligns with the red-tape reduction that Queensland's small and family businesses are clearly calling out for. I point out to the House that Queensland has one of the highest rates of new family and small businesses in the nation—almost half a million small and family businesses employ more than one million Queenslanders. I welcome our government's efforts to cut red tape and allow businesses to not merely survive but, indeed, thrive. The Minister for Housing has announced the red-tape reductions that his department is looking at achieving. The reductions are also there in the construction industry through the pausing of BPIC. It is long overdue.

The Queensland productivity commission was originally introduced, as has been noted by several speakers, by the then Labor government in 2015. In fact, it was in the first term of the Palaszczuk government. It was abolished, incredibly, by the member for Woodridge in 2021. When introduced by the then treasurer Curtis Pitt, it was said that the commission would be an independent economic advisory body with the broad objective of lifting productivity. Productivity is at the very heart of the bill and is in the title of the bill. The now Leader of the Opposition said the Queensland productivity commission 'will provide a vital service for the government and the state'. The former commission reviewed important matters such as electricity prices and service delivery in remote Indigenous communities and improved regulation—all very noble causes.

Productivity is not merely an academic concept. Weak productivity growth has significant consequences for Queensland's households, regardless of where they live in this vast and great state. The real-world effects of lower productivity are lower economic growth, lower wages, higher unemployment and higher inflation. A very damning point that was picked up was that, had productivity growth remained at its pre-2018 average over the subsequent period, it is estimated that Queensland's real per capita income could have been \$11,000 higher in the 2023-24 financial year. The construction

and utilities industries in particular have experienced little or declining productivity growth over the past three decades. Who has been in power in this state for the majority of the last three decades? It was those who now find themselves in opposition. In fact, the economy has been growing by less than 17 per cent since 1994 compared to 64 per cent on the broader market sector, according to Treasury analysis of ABS datasets.

Cutting unnecessary red tape and regulation will reduce costs for Queensland businesses and consumers. I have told the House before that, just before the late, great former member for Chatsworth Bill Hewitt passed, he gave me a book of the acts of parliament for Queensland in 1974. It has a red leather cover, tatty no doubt, and is around 15 to 17 centimetres thick. It contains every single page of legislation for this state in 1974. I put it to you now that, if you were to put that 1974 volume, as tatty as that red leather cover is, at one end of the desk here and then printed out on the same GSM paper every piece of legislation and regulation confronting Queensland businesses today—whether they be small family businesses, SMEs or beyond—it would be greater than 15 to 17 centimetres. It would probably almost reach the end of this desk. That is a considerable length. That is the degree of complexity that has evolved over the years.

This Queensland Productivity Commission Bill is extremely important for the whole state of Queensland. I cannot believe that, back in 2021, the member for Woodridge came into this House and actually got rid of it. It almost defies belief. The reality is this: the commission will be headed by a full-time productivity commissioner, appointed by the Governor in Council. Depending on the commissioner's work program, up to three other full-time or part-time commissioners may be appointed.

Ms Pease interjected.

Mr MINNIKIN: I will take the interjection from the member for Lytton because I would like it noted on the record that the member for Lytton is probably very arguably one of the least qualified people in this chamber to actually utter something like that. I am just waiting for her to take offence. Here we go.

Ms PEASE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence and I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr MINNIKIN: I withdraw. The reality is: we need to make sure—

Ms Pease interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Marr): Member for Chatsworth, take a seat for a moment. Member for Lytton, can you please keep it down. You are encouraging the behaviour and then you are asking for what they are saying to be withdrawn. If you do not want the response, please do not interject.

Mr MINNIKIN: Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your protection. I really do appreciate it. I do appreciate your protection very much. One thing is for sure: some people lack intelligence but some of us at least have a sense of humour.

The reality is that this bill is long overdue. There are a couple of quotes that are worth memorising—in fact, in terms of rebuttal Labor have claimed that this commission would be accountable to no-one except the LNP Treasurer of Queensland, who would assume new powers through the Productivity Commission to enquire into any aspect of Queensland life. Let me point out clearly for those members opposite—a simple crash course in common sense—that proposed section 38(3) cannot be any clearer. It says that any direction given by the Treasurer 'can not be about the content of any advice or recommendation given by the commission'. For the benefit again of those opposite, that is stated in proposed section 38(3).

The question is simply this: do we as a state need to drive productivity? The simple one-word answer is a resounding yes. Yes, we do. We now have in this state a situation where small and family businesses in particular and to a large degree have to pay about \$50,000 in compliance costs—nearly the equivalent of a full-time bookkeeper—to simply look after the red tape that is burdening and in fact drowning many small and family businesses in this state.

One of the interesting things to do—I know that everyone does it—is peruse inaugural speeches of members to see their backgrounds and whether they have any business experience. Every time a new member comes into this chamber I make a note to check their small and family business experience. We now know why, due to the efforts of people like the member for Greenslopes and the member for Lytton, amongst many others, their complete—

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Marr): Members to my left will cease interjecting.

Ms PEASE: I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I take personal offence at the member for Chatsworth's comments and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr MINNIKIN: I withdraw. Madam Deputy Speaker, I again thank you for your ongoing protection. It is very much noted. It is interesting to note when looking at the CVs of those opposite that they lack business acumen. This is why we need the Productivity Commission reintroduced.