




Speech By
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QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (6.24 pm): I rise to make my contribution on the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024 brought to this House by my good friend from Toowoomba South. I want to remind people of the main purpose of the bill. The main purpose of this bill is to establish the Queensland Productivity Commission to undertake inquiries and research and to provide independent advice to the minister in relation to economic and social issues, regulatory matters or legislation, having particular regard to productivity, economic growth and improving living standards in Queensland.

Why on earth anybody would not think that is a good idea, I am not sure. I am sure those opposite thought it was a good idea. Why are we here now? We are here now because in 2021 those opposite abolished such a body because they felt it was not important. The Crisafulli LNP government promised the people of Queensland that we would respect their money. That is exactly what the Productivity Commission is about. It is about making sure that the people of Queensland get value for their tax dollar.

We have heard lots of commentary about the construction industry and utility bills going up and various other things. We have heard about productivity stagnating and even going backwards under the previous government. We have heard commentary about red and green tape and how compliance costs are driving costs up.

People might ask themselves: why is that? We heard members talk about working conditions and how productivity might affect working conditions. Let me say that paying tax at an ever increasing rate because the Labor Party squandered people's money and having an interest bill that has to be met every year is going to affect their working conditions, principally their take-home pay. People go to work for their take-home pay, and their take-home pay is going down because this government squandered money. Therefore, tax has to go up. Then they borrow money and we are left with an interest bill of \$9.9 billion and increasing.

That is 9.9 thousand million dollars. When we get our pay receipt and it shows the tax we have paid, when we buy something and GST goes on, when we pay stamp duty or pay any other government charge, we have to ask ourselves: why does the government need that money? Is it because we have beautiful infrastructure that outstrips everybody else's in a Western democracy on planet earth? Is it because our services are the best available in a Western democracy on planet earth? The reality is that that tax is going up, that interest bill is going up and services are declining.

One only has to ask people in the south-west and Toowoomba about this. We see services declining. Infrastructure is declining. The hospital we needed was \$2.1 billion. The hospital that has been committed to by the previous government was \$1.3 billion. Our interest bill is \$9.9 billion. We could build the hospital multiple times. Because those opposite did not respect people's money and because productivity stagnated that money is not there.

Ultimately, what that means is that there is some intergenerational theft going on. Guess who gets to pay that bill? It will be the next generation. I am lucky; I am approaching an age where in the next decade I will reach retirement. This debt left by the Labor government will exist long after that. My children and maybe their children will still be trying to pay off some of the service delivery that has been declining and was put in place by the Labor government.

That is intergenerational theft. That is taking money from the future to spend now because of a lack of productivity and incompetent administration by those opposite. That is exactly what we have seen with multiple projects across the state. Budgets have blown out. Timelines have blown out. Service delivery was not happening. We have had all the crises across Queensland under the Labor government.

We promised to respect people's money. We promised to respect their tax dollar. That is why we need the Productivity Commission. That is why the Treasurer wants the Productivity Commission. That is why we will be looking at doing an intergenerational equity report. What is fair for us now out of our tax spend and what is fair for the future is very important.

We cannot keep going down the path that the former Labor government had us on. They were living in la-la land when they were making promises that were unfunded and had not been prepared for. They did not know the timelines. What we do know is that we are going to need more children in Queensland because if we do not we are going to have to increase the amount of tax that an individual pays. If people are not sure then just ask themselves: are we better off now than when we were when the Labor government was first elected?

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.



Mr WATTS: Before the break I was talking about the Crisafulli LNP government's promise to respect Queenslanders' money. The Productivity Commission is fundamentally important to make sure that when we do collect tax it is not just treated as revenue. It has actually come out of somebody's pocket so we can deliver services and build infrastructure. That is why we have a government and that is why we pay tax.

When a government is unproductive and when it does things to cause industry to be unproductive—I will not go into BPIC because I know that our deputy will cover off on that, but when the construction industry, whether it is building a bridge or a hospital or whatever, becomes unproductive and inefficient—we have to tax people more. That is what the Labor government was doing to the tune of—I mentioned it before the break—\$9.9 billion in interest. The people of Queensland get nothing for that \$9.9 billion—that is, \$9,900 million. It is just the interest on what has already been spent.

This government, the LNP government, will respect your money. The former Labor government, under various leadership, squandered that money with total disregard, yet they come in here and say, 'Oh, you know, it is about working conditions.' Like I said, the key working condition is: what is in your take-home pay packet? That is why you went to work. Those members opposite will take that and make sure you can buy less with it. That is Labor's philosophy: 'We will tax you more. We will spend it wastefully. We will be unproductive, and we will deliver you declining services and declining infrastructure.' That is what Labor was doing.

The reason we are establishing a productivity commission in Queensland is to do the serious research—to look at where the red and green tape is. Where is the compliance that is unnecessary? Where are the hidden costs that are being put on business, on housing and on everything that the people of Queensland try to do? Where are those hidden costs? Where can we make some productivity gains? How can we improve things so that our services are what people are expecting them to be when they pay their tax and so that we have the infrastructure that is needed for the future?

I spoke a little bit about intergenerational equity. I know there is a report coming on that. When we build infrastructure to last 25 years, fair enough, you can carry some of that forward because people will benefit from it for the next 25 years. What you cannot do is spend beyond your means repeatedly—year after year after year—while your interest is increasing, because that is stealing from a future generation. That is stealing their tax dollars for services that they will never receive because that service has already been delivered to somebody else and they did not have enough money in the bank to pay for it.

The reason productivity is important to the LNP is that we want to respect taxpayers' money. We want to spend it effectively, efficiently and productively so that we can be the Queensland that everybody wants us to be when they pay their tax.