




Speech By
Mark Boothman

MEMBER FOR THEODORE

Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2022

**PUBLIC TRUSTEE (ADVISORY AND MONITORING BOARD) MANAGEMENT
BILL**

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (3.03 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the Public Trustee (Advisory and Monitoring Board) Amendment Bill 2021. The Public Trustee's website states—

The Public Trustee is a socially and fiscally responsive Statutory Authority that helps to make decisions that enhance the dignity, rights and interests of Queenslanders.

Over the years, my office has been contacted by many distraught constituents who have been dealing with the Public Trustee, yet these are only a few of what I suspect is a much larger number who are suffering at the hands of this organisation on a daily basis. There are 10,000 Queenslanders who rely on the Public Trustee to control their assets, where they live, what car they use and what gifts or items they buy for themselves, collecting receipts for reimbursement. Very few of us would tolerate this type of interference in our daily lives, but for many Queenslanders this is a daily occurrence. We should also think about the families forced to deal with the Public Trustee because of their loved ones. The families I have spoken to previously were frustrated by the culture of the Public Trustee's office and horrified by the enormous fees they charged. These families felt they were trapped by government bureaucracy and could see very little light at the end of the tunnel. They felt that the Public Trustee was more interested in protecting its own position than theirs.

On 15 March 2022 *Four Corners* highlighted damning criticism of the Public Trustee. There were allegations of: corrupt conduct; unfair commissions and fee gouging; dysfunctional office culture; financial mismanagement and investing in the PTO growth fund; unqualified personnel giving legal advice; poor management and delays in administering deceased estates; lack of transparency regarding the fees and policies that guide how and when they are charged; enticing people with the offer of a free will, only to upsell their executor services and charge excessively for these services after the person dies; and conflicts of interest relating to the use of the official solicitor's policies and practices. This bill does little to resolve the issues highlighted by the *Four Corners* program or help the 10,000 Queenslanders who rely on the Public Trustee.

I need to reiterate that these are some of our most vulnerable people and families; therefore, this bill is nothing more than window-dressing. The government had an opportunity to introduce real reforms that will help these vulnerable Queenslanders, but they have chosen not to. This bill could have delivered reforms that are desperately needed and given our most vulnerable the voice they desperately need. I also ask those opposite to consider the amendments moved by the shadow Attorney-General, as they will give further transparency to this office. These are very well thought out amendments that give a time period for tabling their report so people can see what is going on with the Public Trustee. I implore the House to support those amendments.