

Committee Secretary
Legal Affairs and Safety Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000
Sent via email to: egc@parliament.qld.gov.au

15 April 2021

RE: Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021

Dear Committee Secretary

Engineers Australia is the peak body for the engineering profession. We are a member-based professional association with over 100,000 individual members. Established in 1919, Engineers Australia is a not-for-profit organisation, constituted by Royal Charter to advance the science and practice of engineering for the benefit of the community.

Engineers Australia is pleased to have the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed Bill. Our comments are focussed on the following objective of the Bill:

- abolish Building Queensland (BQ) and the BQ board; and integrate BQ's staff, assets, records, resources and liabilities into the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (DSDILGP);

BQ was established to 'provide independent expert advice to the State on matters relating to infrastructure in Queensland.'

Whilst there is no objection to the aim of achieving cost savings – is this the only driver for change? How will the independence of advice now be achieved?

It is noted that '*The provisions of the Bill related to the repeal of the BQ Act and amendment of the QIPP Act are specific to the State of Queensland and are not uniform or complementary to the legislation of the Commonwealth or another State.*'

However, Engineers Australia would like to note that similar legislation (similar to the BQ Act) does exist in other jurisdictions:

Infrastructure Australia is the nation's independent infrastructure advisor. Infrastructure Australia was established in 2008 to advise governments, industry and the community on the investments and reforms needed to deliver better infrastructure for all Australians. The organisation is led by an independent Board and CEO.

Infrastructure NSW was established in July 2011 (Infrastructure NSW Act 2011) to assist the NSW Government in identifying and prioritising the delivery of critical public infrastructure for NSW. It is a NSW government agency established under the Infrastructure NSW Act and it exhibits important features of independence.

Infrastructure Victoria was established in October 2015 (*Infrastructure Victoria Act 2015*) as a statutory authority, with the **independence** and appropriate powers to support its role to provide trusted, evidence-based advice to government.

Infrastructure WA provides expert advice and assistance to the WA Government on a range of infrastructure matters, particularly regarding the State's infrastructure needs and priorities, to support the following objectives. The *Infrastructure Western Australia Act 2019* came into effect on 24 July 2019 (most parts), establishing Infrastructure WA to provide advice and assistance to the Government on matters relating to infrastructure.

Engineers Australia notes that *'No community consultation has been undertaken on the repeal of the BQ Act as the Government's decision to undertake the structural reform of BQ only impacts the internal operations and governance structure of public sector entities and there is no material impact on the community.'*

BQ provided a rigorous framework for business case development that, through its independent board, provided a real or perceived independence of process and decision making. How will government ensure that this independence is maintained, especially when the investigations will now be funded directly by the government agencies themselves and the BQ functionality, to be housed within *DSDILGP*, is merely to assist?

Will the business case development process be leaner and less rigorous as a result of this change? There does not currently seem to be direction on how these guidelines will be changed, and whether they will be updated. Given this, there is a risk that we may lose the current rigorous processes we follow and the credibility/strength of business cases undertaken, particularly during the transition period, may be questioned.

Engineers Australia is also interested in how the governance process will be set up in the future in terms of project assurance processes and the competency of the personnel involved (eg Chartered and / or Registered Professional Engineers of Qld).

Thank you for considering this submission. If you would like to discuss the issues raised in more detail, please contact me on srawlings@engineersaustralia.org.au or 0404 123 896.

Regards



Stacey Rawlings
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