



EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Members present:

Ms LM Linard MP (Chair)
Mr JJ McDonald (via teleconference)
Mr BM Saunders MP (via teleconference)
Mrs SM Wilson MP (via teleconference)
Mr MP Healy MP (via teleconference)
Mr N Dametto MP (via teleconference)

Staff present:

Ms E Jameson (Acting Committee Secretary)
Ms A Groth (Assistant Committee Secretary)

PUBLIC BRIEFING—INQUIRY INTO THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2020

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

MONDAY, 27 JULY 2020

Brisbane

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The committee met at 9.20 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open this public briefing for the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee's inquiry into the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting this morning and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. My name is Leanne Linard. I am the chair of the committee and the member for Nudgee. The other members of this committee who are joining us via phone are Mr Jim McDonald, member for Lockyer and deputy chair; Mr Michael Healy, member for Cairns; Mrs Simone Wilson, member for Pumicestone; Mr Bruce Saunders, member for Maryborough; and Mr Nick Dametto, member for Hinchinbrook.

On 16 July this year the Premier and Minister for Trade, the Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk, introduced the bill to the parliament. The bill was referred to the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee for examination, with a reporting date of 28 August 2020. The committee will be briefed today by representatives from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet in relation to the bill. These proceedings are similar to parliament and are subject to the Legislative Assembly's standing rules and orders. In this regard I remind members of the public that under the standing orders the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee. The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and broadcast live on the parliament's website. All those present today should note that it is possible you may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. I ask everyone present to turn mobile phones off or to silent mode.

The purpose of today is to assist the committee with its examination of the bill. I remind committee members that departmental officers are here to provide factual or technical information. Any questions seeking an opinion about policy should be directed to the minister or left to debate on the floor of the House.

**COOK, Mr Shannon, Deputy Commissioner, Public Sector Reform Office,
Department of the Premier and Cabinet**

**ROONEY, Ms Patricia, Director, Public Sector Reform Office, Department of the
Premier and Cabinet**

CHAIR: Thank you for your written briefing on the bill which will soon be available on the committee's webpage. I invite you to brief the committee after which committee members will ask some questions. Thank you.

Mr Cook: Thank you, Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this briefing regarding the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I would also like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the lands on which we meet and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging.

If it pleases the committee, I will provide a brief overview of the background to the bill and the key reforms being progressed by the bill and then we will be pleased to answer any questions that the committee may have. In September 2018 the Premier and Minister for Trade commissioned Mr Peter Bridgman to conduct an independent review on how Queensland public sector employment laws could best meet the objectives of fairness in the employment relationship, responsiveness of employees to the community and to government, and inclusiveness of public sector employment. Mr Bridgman's report, titled *A fair and responsive Public Service for all*, made 99 recommendations and outlined how the public sector employment framework should be changed to meet the objectives of fair, responsive and inclusive public sector employment. The Bridgman report also considered how the employment relationship is formed and managed and how public services are organised.

Mr Bridgman conducted wideranging consultation with stakeholders inside government, including directors-general, chief human resource officers and the Public Service Commission, and with public sector unions. The Bridgman review complements the Coaldrake review into public sector workforce reporting, which reported in December 2018 and made recommendations to further increase the transparency of public sector workforce data, provide options for access to improved and consistent data, and allow better budgeting and planning for public sector workforce need.

In response to the Bridgman report the Queensland government established a program management office named the Public Sector Reform Office, reporting to the director-general, within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to consider the implementation of the proposed public sector reforms. A joint advisory committee was also formed to facilitate consultation. It is chaired by me as head of the Public Sector Reform Office and includes the head of the Office of Industrial Relations, the Public Service Commission and representatives from key public sector unions. Given the breadth of the reforms and recommendations, the government decided to progress priority reforms to modernise and strengthen the administration of the Queensland Public Service as part of stage 1 public sector reforms, with stage 2 to progress further legislative reforms including a new public sector act.

The Public Sector Reform Office worked with the joint advisory committee to determine the priority stage 1 reforms in response to the Bridgman review, the Coaldrake review and other existing and emerging public sector management issues. The Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill implements the priority stage 1 public sector management reforms. The bill progresses priorities in two main areas. The first is to give full effect to the government's commitment to maximise employment security in public sector employment. The second is to provide for positive performance management of public sector employees.

With respect to security in public sector employment, the bill provides in simple language that permanent employment is the default basis for Public Service employment and that other non-permanent forms of employment should only be used when ongoing employment is not viable or appropriate. It also moves the criteria for the employment of fixed-term, temporary and casual employees into the act to ensure that fixed-term employment is used in appropriate circumstances and also requires that chief executives implement workforce planning within their agencies. These measures support the consistent application of the government's employment security policy which was reinstated in March 2015.

With respect to positive performance management, the bill sets out principles of positive performance management to guide the management of public sector employees. It requires that the positive performance principles must be applied before disciplinary action can be taken and requires a directive to be made to give effect to the principles through a positive performance management framework. These provisions respond to the Bridgman review recommendation that the Public Service Act should proceed from a positive performance framework that recognises employees are there for a reason, and that is to do the necessary and valuable work of government; that they have been appointed on merit for that purpose; and that achievement of that purpose is valued. The measures will help ensure that managers and employees work together to support optimal performance and ensure quality of service.

Other provisions of the bill provide for Public Service appeals to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission under the Industrial Relations Act to ensure transparency and increased consistency in appeal decisions; amend citizenship requirements for public servants; provide for the reappointment in certain circumstances of public servants who resign to contest a federal or state election; and require new directives to be made for discipline investigations and suspension. Thank you for the opportunity to make an opening statement. We would be pleased to answer any questions the committee would have.

CHAIR: Thank you for your opening comments and the written brief. It has provided a good, broad framework with regard to these priority reforms. In respect of the Bridgman review, what were some of the key observations that were made with respect to the performance management processes currently in place in the department?

Mr Cook: I can probably speak to that quite broadly and then we might look to see if we can get some details. Thematically, it came from a very corrective position rather than acknowledging that employees are already doing a good job before they are doing a bad job, and that needed to be looked at. It also observed that performance management could benefit from a more consistent approach and certainly from central guidance. Bridgman also made certain observations about capability levels in the sector in terms of those being very variable in terms of providing performance management to employees and employee responses to those.

In terms of other aspects of what Bridgman has referred to, he has connected that to the need for a positive performance framework—hence we have introduced those principles into the bill—and then to corrective action. That corrective action, when it progresses to a more serious stage of discipline, should be really distinct from performance and there should be tiered and abbreviated processes for early intervention when there is performance or conduct that is emerging that might be a bit of a concern to a manager or a leader.

CHAIR: Can you expand on what those positive performance principles are? Obviously we can read the explanatory notes, but I am interested in your observations in regard to those. I would think positive performance management principles such as continuous feedback are fairly well understood. I am the manager of a team and always have been. HR is my background. They are already fairly embedded, are they not, in the Public Service with regard to regular performance appraisals, the continuous cycle of feedback, upskilling? Did you want to expand on some of those principles and why they are perhaps not as broadly instituted as they could be?

Mr Cook: I think the answer is in the very question you have asked. They are there. In terms of being consistent, that is a huge thing. Establishing those in legislation and having a requirement for a central policy directive underneath that to provide some of the guidance that the chair referred to is directly useful for managers on the ground in terms of how to approach a particular conversation or a particular situation. I think, based on Bridgman's observations, the act could be interpreted to only facilitate when something has gone wrong as opposed to everything that should be happening before that. The positive principles seek to facilitate that by encouraging regular conversations, understanding that we are doing performance management in the first place to keep employees engaged and to keep the public sector at a high level of capability in terms of development and, again, as I indicated before, really early intervention and coaching to make sure that everybody is exhibiting the kind of behaviours and performance that we want. We think establishing those principles in accordance with what Bridgman has recommended is the foundation of it. That has to be supplemented, as the chair has indicated in her question, with the further direction that will come in the form of the directive that the Public Service Commissioner is leading development of now to coincide with the implementation of the bill.

CHAIR: The directions are great and the positive principles are great. As you say, they provide a framework. How are you then going to appropriately resource and upskill managers? In some areas they may be technicians but not natural managers or perhaps they are natural managers but have not necessarily had development in terms of developing others and having difficult conversations but having them proactively and positively. How will you then go through a process of upskilling so that we have better management skills across the board?

Mr Cook: That is one of the aspects that the Public Service Commissioner is looking at now. I cannot give you a detailed answer to that at the moment. That is being developed and the Public Service Commission is doing, I think, a good job of leading that. Part of looking at the directives, as they would with any new directive, is to look at those very facets that you have raised and provide central support. I would point to a number of other bits of collateral that the Public Service Commissioner has developed to deal with other aspects of human resource management. That would very likely be a product that would be accompanying the directive on implementation. Beyond that, it really is about that material being successfully adapted by human resource practitioners and leaders within each agency. Again, the Public Service Commission is leading that work to ensure there is connection back to the front line and to leaders who, as you have mentioned, might need that upskilling.

CHAIR: Did the Bridgman review—and I do not have it open in front of me—make any comments in regard to the very important work that the centralised and specialised HR units within departments do, and the importance of a lot of that work actually being done by the line managers themselves? I know we are coming back to continuous feedback et cetera. It has been my experience previously in public service—and I have been a public servant in the Commonwealth as well—that sometimes these matters are referred to the HR unit when they really should be devolved down to the local level and managed at a very early stage. Were there any specific comments in regard to that delineation between central units and line managers?

Mr Cook: I would certainly agree with that observation, Chair. I have been a chief HR officer in other agencies as well, so I am resisting the urge to go into anecdote. Bridgman himself never strays from the fact that performance development is primarily the responsibility of both the employee and the manager and that managers are in fact there to manage and to lead. We would hope that that has emerged in the way that we have framed the principles. You will note in the principles that it does not talk about this being the responsibility of a workforce, a HR area. Connected to other things that I am sure we will discuss, in terms of workforce planning and resource planning the bill attempts to make it very clear that it is the responsibility of the executive of an agency to ensure that those things are in place. On positive performance, Bridgman himself does not stray from that. It is very much manager and employee relationship centric; that is the way that I would position it.

Mr McDONALD: Thanks, Mr Cook and Ms Rooney, for being here. I appreciate your opening statement. My question relates to the conversion from one year. I note that the bill seeks to give fixed-term temporary employees and casual employees the opportunity to ask for a permanent position

after one year, rather than the current two years. I am curious to learn more about whether any fixed or recommended conversion quotas are set by either the department or the Public Service Commission.

Mr Cook: The short answer is no. There were no quotas attached previously or that have been attached to this bill in the requirement for a review at 12 months.

Mr McDONALD: I understand that the department meets with the Together union on a regular basis. Does the Together union have quotas that it is attempting to achieve?

Mr Cook: I think that is something that the Together union would need to respond to. What we are looking at here is the product of consultation with the Together union and the other unions. There are no quotas present, as previously stated, connected to this bill or the directives that support it.

Mr McDONALD: What is the current number of temporary and casual employees across the state government?

Mr Cook: The last publicly released information about the number of employees was released by the Public Service Commission as part of the public sector workforce profile in June 2019. The number of FTEs by appointment type was 183,175.78 permanent, 38,544.35 temporary, 6,547.52 casual and 1,679.58 contract, with the total being 229,947.23. By percentage, that is 79.66 per cent permanent, 16.76 per cent temporary, 2.85 per cent casual and 0.73 per cent contract.

Mr SAUNDERS: Will there be a good education program for public servants so that the changes in the bill will be explained to them, not only for the mid-level and top-level management but also for the public servants on the ground?

Mr Cook: At the moment that is something that is under detailed consideration around, as mentioned, the development of the directives that are supporting the bill by the Public Service Commission. I would also point out that, as part of the consultation process, through the Public Service Commission we have also been consulting with chief human resource officers across the sector and senior executives who are aware of the initiatives and the reforms that are underway. The very sensible things that have been listed there are in the process of being developed with those parties at the moment, to be timed with the implementation of the bill.

Mr SAUNDERS: Will any public servants have to reapply for their positions due to these reforms?

Mr Cook: The short answer is no. Nobody will have a loss of employment or employment status as a result of the bill.

Mrs WILSON: Chair, my phone is playing up a bit so perhaps you should move forward. My phone is cutting in and out.

CHAIR: No problem. We will go to the member for Hinchinbrook.

Mr DAMETTO: Thank you, Madam Chair. My phone is also playing up a little, but I will try to get in a quick question. Mr Cook, who has called for this legislative change? Is it being pushed by the departmental staff, unions or government?

Mr Cook: I think the legislation change is a direct recommendation of Peter Bridgman. That is a consensus that he reached by speaking to all of the parties that the member has mentioned. He outlines at the front of his report that he undertook extensive consultation with the public sector, public sector agencies, government and public sector unions. I would note that as part of his consultation Mr Bridgman also invited submissions from anybody. There was an address to which anybody could send submissions. The change to legislation was a direct result of his recommendations and the consensus that he reached.

Mr HEALY: Thank you, Mr Cook, for your opening statement. I see that there will be a new special commissioner. I am interested in their duties as compared to the duties of the Public Service Commissioner. Could you outline the disparity there?

Mr Cook: In his recommendations Mr Bridgman actually recommended that there be a five-year program of rolling reviews that the Queensland Governance Council, which is an evolution of the current Public Service Commission Board, would undertake and that that would form the basis of what a special commissioner would look at. You will also note in the bill that Bridgman has made some recommendations that a special commissioner can facilitate and conduct inquiries with an agency. I believe his recommendation and what he is looking to establish with special commissioners is that they have an additional degree of focus and intensity distinct from the general duties of both the Public Service Commissioner—or commission chief executive as he is at the moment—and the deputy commissioners within the Public Service Commission and would have a very specific remit.

You will note from our public release that the first intended special commission, which has been slowed down due to the impacts of our response to COVID, has been, for example, on equity and diversity. That special commissioner would come on board and look, with dedicated focus and fresh eyes, at that theme of pay equity and diversity and recruitment equity and diversity across the sector and provide direct recommendations back to the Queensland Governance Council and, potentially, to the Premier.

Mr HEALY: Mr Cook, in relation to the positive performance management principles that are outlined in clause 21—I am always interested in the practical application—how do you envisage those would be integrated into management practice and policies? How will departments be supported to implement these changes? At the end of the day, how will all of this be integrated? It looks good when you read it, but what is the real application? How will it all work?

Mr Cook: There are a couple of facets, and I refer back to my earlier responses. There is a policy directive that is going to contain more detailed guidance on the practical application, as the member has indicated, of those particular principles. How you actually turn those into reality on the ground will very much be a facet of that directive and the natural collateral that the Public Service Commission, with the support of the Public Sector Reform Office, would develop around that. Those are in the stages of being developed as well as any supporting training and skills uplift that might be required for managers.

We also make sure that, in developing those materials, we do so in consultation and collaboration with agencies. The Public Service Commission already has really good, established networks to do that with its connection to the chief HR officer network. We would collaborate very strongly, acknowledging the earlier statement where it is not—and Bridgman certainly does not make the statement—the responsibility of a HR department to manage an individual employee's performance development. Where the existing HR resourcing departments and training departments can help is in the capability uplift of the organisation generally in managing performance.

Mr HEALY: I am assuming that is a trial and error sort of process? You have your guidelines and then you work your way through that?

Mr Cook: Correct, yes.

Mr McDONALD: Mr Cook, I note the bill seeks to expand who can work in the Public Service and will allow refugees and asylum seekers to be Public Service officers, even if they will not be in Australia indefinitely. Will there be a cap on the number of refugees and asylum seekers, or does the government have a set target in mind?

Mr Cook: Being a diverse and inclusive employer, as with any other group that we would look at, we would not place a cap on the number being employed. It makes it more straightforward for those individuals to secure a position. I would note that the clause is very specific that they can continue to work in that position directly as long as they maintain that lawful right to work in Australia.

Mr McDONALD: Obviously there is some process in place to determine if that status remains for their placement in Australia?

Mr Cook: Correct, yes.

CHAIR: I do not know if that was clarified for the deputy chair, but he used the term 'refugees and asylum seekers'. Are they able to be granted work visas? I would think there is a definitional issue here. I just want to make sure that is clear for the committee.

Mr Cook: That definition is not used in the bill. It is how Bridgman has framed it, and it is a useful example for us to use as to who this is going to potentially provide a benefit for. At the moment it just says with the distinction being that the access to Public Service officer employment may be restricted for people who have that status. It may not be a worker visa status; it may be through refugee or asylum seeker status, but they do and have been granted a lawful right to work in Australia. They should be able to access those positions for as long as they have that lawful right.

Mr McDONALD: Given the devastating impact that coronavirus has had on the Australian economy and the high unemployment rate, will Australian citizens or permanent residents be preferred over asylum seekers?

Mr Cook: That is not a matter that the bill itself contends with. All I can point to is, again, the desire to be a diverse and inclusive employer.

CHAIR: I imagine that with any of these processes it would be a case of the best applicant for the job that meets the required criteria, as is long established. Is that correct?

Mr Cook: That is correct.

CHAIR: Moving to the purpose of the bill, I think it is an excellent principle that permanent employment is a default basis. It is one of those issues that is often raised about ongoing rolling contracts. I note here that it states ‘unless it is not viable or appropriate’. I am interested to look at the definition of what is not viable or appropriate. Referring to the criteria that the bill introduces, there is a number of very reasonable criteria, but some are sufficiently broad and should be—legislation is often a very blunt tool so it needs to be sufficiently broad. It states ‘to fill a position for which funding is uncertain or unknown’. While introducing criteria would seem to be positive in respect of providing greater guidance into departments about rolling contracts, how will this practically serve the purpose the review is trying to achieve, which is to give greater permanency to people who deserve it but are not getting it?

Mr Cook: In terms of that criteria, that is probably a really good example to support that question. I think it is important to note that in the bill we have endeavoured to provide examples under each of those criteria to offset those sometimes competing interests: the need to reasonably be able to manage and resource a department within its designated allocations and ensuring that employees have the ability to access that commitment for permanent employment.

Ongoing funding is a consideration. If I use the example of something like a project, from the commencement of the employment arrangement there is temporary funding and, therefore, the nature of the employment will be temporary; there is an end date when that project ceases. It is meant to capture circumstances such as that.

In terms of potential ongoing temporary funding, we believe that criteria is appropriately offset by a couple of things. One of them is the firm institution in the legislation of the requirement for chief executives to undertake workforce planning. A key part of workforce planning is resource planning, which means forecasting ahead of time, before a conversion decision is required, what resourcing a department is actually going to need. That is supplemented by the new ability for an employee to request a review at 12 months and the ongoing conversion reviews, with their conversion criteria moved into legislation, also supported by appeals of those conversion decisions being heard by the Industrial Relations Commission under the Industrial Relations Act. We believe that firmly offsets any potential misuse of those criteria but still allows it to be broad enough that an agency can legitimately manage within its resource allocation.

CHAIR: Again returning to the purpose of the bill and the key principles, it talks here about changing the threshold for taking disciplinary action. I would appreciate it if you spoke practically to the existing threshold and how that will change under the bill.

Mr Cook: Part of Bridgman’s recommendations and his observations that we spoke about earlier was the need for abbreviated and tiered approaches to managing behavioural and performance issues. One of the considerations that came up when we were implementing his recommendations was around the requirement for disciplinary action to be taken when there has been a breach of the code of conduct. The view gathered through that process was that the way that was positioned at the moment could be read that any breach of the code, no matter how minor—noting that the code has certain aspirational bits in it—would require a disciplinary process and disciplinary aspect. That could lead to a couple of instances of extreme behaviour that we would not want where very minor breaches, which is another thing that Bridgman notes in this review, are being subjected to full investigation processes that can go on for months and then result in disciplinary action when an abbreviated process could have been used to much greater effect and received an outcome without as much resource and commitment.

The other behaviour it could potentially drive is that, because of that perceived requirement to undertake a full disciplinary process, minor breaches of the code of conduct will not be addressed. There may be some perverse incentive for leaders to avoid those conversations because they are going to lead into a full process when they do not need to.

To offset those potential outcomes, we clarified the wording to say that in the case of a breach of the code that is sufficiently serious to warrant disciplinary action then disciplinary action should be taken. That leaves room for a manager or a leader to take some of the local action we have spoken about in terms of a conversation, counselling or perhaps even a warning with an employee without an obligation under the code to follow through with a full investigation and disciplinary process.

CHAIR: Do you have an idea how many disciplinary actions are taken currently? Is there an expected change in the number under these amendments? Has any forecasting been done in that regard?

Mr Cook: We have done some estimations. I am not in a position to share the numbers directly with the committee. The Public Service Commission, as Bridgman indicates in his report, has a Conduct and Performance Excellence framework, the CaPE framework, in which it tracks the number

of active matters that are there. We have looked at those numbers. Bridgman obviously looked at those numbers as well and indicated some of those numbers. We would expect that it would take some time over the course of implementation of the bill and that shift in practice to see some shifts in those time frames.

CHAIR: Members, we have a few minutes remaining. Are there any members who have supplementary questions? I know that some of you are having issues with hearing.

Mr SAUNDERS: I am having a bit of trouble hearing at the moment. This will also give, I believe, good advice for public servants. If they are going to go to full time after being temporary for 12 months, this will make sure we get the good employees and it is good for local economies as people know they have full-time work in the Public Service. Did this come out in the review?

Mr Cook: I do not think the member's direct observations came out as a result of the review. However, in terms of the overall benefit of having a Public Service that is secured around permanent employment, Bridgman related that back to Westminster principles of government—that there is a direct and indirect benefit to the public of ensuring that those employment principles are in place and that the Public Service is effectively and efficiently managed.

CHAIR: Are there any more supplementaries before I go back to the deputy chair, because he and I have both asked supplementaries. There are about three minutes remaining.

Mrs WILSON: Can you hear me?

CHAIR: Yes, we can hear you.

Mrs WILSON: I am really struggling to hear you. If it is okay, can I get Jim to ask a supplementary if I send it through to him?

CHAIR: Absolutely. We have three minutes. We will go to the member for Cairns, who has not asked a supplementary. You can get that to him in the next three minutes. I am sorry you are having issues with hearing. We will try to resolve those between now and the second hearing.

Mr HEALY: Mr Cook, on the commencement of the provision in proposed section 149 whereby temporary employees can make an application if they reach between 12 months and two years of continuous service, how many applications would you expect to receive should the bill pass?

Mr Cook: I am not in a position to share an exact number with the committee, except to say that it is noted as part of the estimations that we have done around the bill that this can be successfully managed with the existing resources that are in place.

Mr HEALY: I am acutely aware of the details there. It would just be speculation. There is no rough indication of your expectation of the number of applications?

Mr Cook: Not that I can share, sorry, except to say that, in the projections and estimations that we have done around that and all other aspects of the bill, we fully expect that to be manageable within the departments' existing resource allocation. I note that there are resources in place at the moment that manage the existing conversion review processes.

Mr HEALY: That is more where I am coming from in relation to ensuring there are sufficient resources in the event that we start to see a significant escalation and we do not have the resources. That question is inspired by the capacity from a resource perspective, but you are saying there are sufficient resources there?

Mr Cook: Yes, there are.

CHAIR: The final question in this last minute to will be asked by the deputy chair, if the member for Pumicestone was able to get that question to him. If not, I will close the hearing.

Mr McDONALD: I am aware the government departments meet with the Together union on a regular basis to discuss issues such as the number of temporary employees who have been converted to permanent positions. Can you advise the number of times each department has conducted a meeting with the Together union to discuss workplace issues between 2016 and 2020? You might want to take that on notice.

CHAIR: Deputy Chair, it is a bit broad. Can you extrapolate on relevance to the bill we are dealing with here?

Mr McDONALD: There are a number of public commentaries around the meetings by the Together union on a monthly basis with departments to achieve permanent positions and a conversion to their quotas. I am really keen to see how many times the union met with the departments between those times, especially given that on page 4 of the explanatory notes it states the joint steering committee comprises—rightly so—the seven or eight unions including the Together union.

Mr Cook: I can briefly respond in the time we have left by saying there is a standing requirement for agency consultative committees in industrial instruments and they regularly meet with individual agencies and departments. It would be quite challenging to try to do a tally of exactly how many times that has met. I can clarify the number of times the joint advisory committee has met, which comprises Together union and other public sector unions. Since December 2019 we have met 12 times—since it has been established.

Mr McDONALD: Sorry, that dropped out. I did not hear the answer to that. Was it 12 times?

Mr Cook: The joint advisory committee has met 12 times, yes.

CHAIR: That concludes this briefing. Thank you to the departmental officers who have kindly participated today to assist the committee. Thank you to our Hansard reporters. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's parliamentary webpage in due course. I declare this public briefing for the committee's inquiry into the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 closed.

The committee adjourned at 10.02 am.