

~~Bill read a first time.~~

~~Referral to the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee~~

~~Madam SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee.~~

023

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction



Hon. DF CRISAFULLI (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government) (2.41 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the City of Brisbane Act 2010, the Judicial Review Act 1991, the Libraries Act 1988, the Local Government Act 2009, the Local Government Electoral Act 2011, the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001, the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010, the Public Sector Ethics Act 1994, the Public Service Act 2008, the Right to Information Act 2009 and the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 for particular purposes. I table the bill and explanatory notes. I nominate the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012.

Tabled paper: Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, explanatory notes.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. It gives me even greater pleasure to do so after the Deputy Premier has introduced the Sustainable Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This is indeed a great day for local communities.

Local governments have for a long time been waiting for the amendments that are contained in this bill. They have been waiting a long time for the 'local' to be put back into 'local government' and to once again have control over their own destinies. This bill represents the first stage in what will be an ongoing process to achieve this. The government went to the last state election with a clear platform to grow a four-pillar economy, lower the cost of living by cutting waste, deliver better infrastructure and better planning, revitalise front-line services for families, and restore accountability in government. The government regards local governments as key players in the work that will be necessary to achieve this goal. Our policy aims to empower local governments to improve front-line services and give local people a real say on the future direction of their communities.

In doing so, our key aim is to give councils a high level of autonomy, authority and responsibility to plan and solve local problems and manage local community growth. Local councils need to be properly empowered to operate with increased accountability and transparency to their communities. We have been working hard to restore the relationship between the state and local governments and to honour our election commitments to the local government sector. Within the next month, I will have visited all of the 73 councils in Queensland, and I have listened to what mayors and councillors want. I thank the members of this chamber who have joined me on that journey.

The bill I introduce today is the culmination of this consultation, as well as the respect our government has shown for local government by taking on board many of their concerns and suggestions for improving the local government legislation. The previous government was only interested in controlling and telling local governments what to do. By contrast, we are interested in empowering local communities to have more control over their own destinies. My goal has been to hear and listen to the concerns of local governments about the problems with the current legislation and ways these might be addressed.

Our government came to office with a clear reform agenda for the local government legislation. This reform agenda was designed to address the concerns of local councils and local communities. In fact, this government includes 13 former local government mayors and councillors, six of whom serve in cabinet, including of course our Premier, Deputy Premier and Treasurer.

From our active engagement with councils, we knew it was important to introduce amendments to the local government legislation to: put mayors and councillors clearly in charge of councils; give mayors the authority they need to take direct action for ratepayers; reinstate the body corporate status of local governments; restore clear, fairer conflict of interest provisions for councillors; enable better cooperation and sharing of resources between councils by strengthening joint local government arrangements; remove the prohibition on councillors standing for election to state parliament; and cut unnecessary red tape and bureaucratic requirements and interference from the state government. The bill I introduce today implements each and every one of these policy initiatives, and the explanatory notes provide detailed information about all of the various amendments. For far too long, local governments have been frustrated, as I have been, by the pointless and unnecessary restriction, red tape and prescription in the local government legislation which derived from a 'Brisbane knows best' mentality.

I wish to stress that this is not the end of the process. I intend to maintain a watching brief over the legislation and expect to make further changes in the future. Also, the current local government regulations are extremely detailed and overly prescriptive. Over the course of the next few months, I intend for complementary changes to be made to the regulations to remove unnecessary red tape and prescription. This will further ease the burden on local governments and, consequently, on ratepayers. As I mentioned at the outset, this bill is a demonstration of the new start between the state and local governments in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. DF CRISAFULLI (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government) (2.47 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee.

~~APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL~~

~~APPROPRIATION BILL~~

~~FISCAL REPAIR AMENDMENT BILL~~

~~Second Reading (Cognate Debate)~~

~~Resumed from p. 1944, on motion of Mr Nicholls—~~

~~That the bills be now read a second time.~~

Hon. BS FLEGG (Moggill—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (2.47 pm): I will resume my speech which was interrupted by the lunch break. I am speaking in relation to the Queensland budget, the Appropriation Bill, particularly in relation to my portfolio.

I want to paint a picture of the state of public housing that the Labor government left us to clean up. When I came to this portfolio and got the first day briefing that ministers get, I was presented with an old, inappropriate portfolio of over 50,000 government owned houses, a portfolio that because of mismanagement was operating at a loss, a portfolio that was selling houses when they became vacant to help fund those losses, and 30,000 Queensland families equating to 70,000 people on the waiting list, of which around one third were homeless. Every month I get an update of the figures as to how the housing system is going. Over the 12 months to the end of July, the number of homeless families on the waiting list for Queensland public housing rose from 8,500 to almost 10,500. That was in one year. That is a 22 per cent increase in the number of homeless families.

What happened to government owned and operated houses during that time as this government mismanaged and incompetently performed its duties in housing? How many more government owned and operated houses did we get over that same year? There were 200 fewer government owned houses over the same year during which nearly 2,000 extra Queensland families registered for housing assistance and were in the homeless category. That is nothing but shameful. In all the time that we sat on the other side of this chamber never once did I hear those lazy incompetent members who managed housing ever tell the truth. I never saw the truth until I was able to access the information in the department. It is a shame.

It is this sort of background that has meant we have had to make some hard decisions that might not have been necessary had it not been for the negligence and incompetence of those who governed before us. We have had to make decisions like cancelling funding for the TAAS program. We are taking steps to ensure that tenants in the private sector do not suffer because of that decision, but it was a decision about which we had no choice; make no mistakes about that. The RTA is doing a fabulous job reorientating its service and ensuring that those extra services will be available to private sector tenants