

Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

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The Committee
Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee
Parliament House, George Street, Brisbane QLD 4000
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Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 (the Bill)

Introduction

The short title of the Bill is the Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 ("the Bill or this Bill").

The Civil Contractors Federation Queensland Limited (CCF QLD) represents the interests and enhanced prosperity of the civil construction industry in Queensland. CCF QLD prides itself on being the voice of the civil construction industry and advocates for the interests of industry to all levels of government. We are responsible for representing the Queensland civil construction industry; from as far north as Cairns to as far south as Northern New South Wales.

Civil Contractors Federation Queensland Limited (CCF QLD) has three Queensland Civil Industry Training Centres (QCITC) located in Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns, with Brisbane being our head office. CCF QLD is a Registered Organisation under the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009. CCF operates as a non-profit entity governed by a constitution approved by Fair Work Australia.

Background

As infrastructure builders, members of CCF QLD spend significant time engaging with Local Governments across Queensland, upgrading local roads and sewerage, as well as delivering critical civil works for new housing developments.

Queensland, particularly South-East Queensland has had enormous population growth in recent years. This will continue, with population projections suggesting that South-East Queensland will have 6 million people by 2046, up from approximately 4 million in the middle of 2024¹. The economic and social hub of South-East Queensland, Brisbane, is already Australia's most congested city². Population growth, driving the need for new housing and transport and the Brisbane 2032 Olympics and Paralympic Games have created a perfect storm in the civil construction industry in Queensland. These factors create an enormous impetus to ensure that Queensland's entire civil construction sector is as productive as possible in the coming years.

¹ Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (2024) ShapingSEQ2023, Planning. Available at: <https://www.planning.qld.gov.au/planning-framework/plan-making/regional-planning/south-east-queensland-regional-plan> (Accessed: 13 October 2025).

² Brisbane is Australia's most traffic-congested city (no date) Drive. Available at: <https://www.drive.com.au/news/brisbane-australia-most-traffic-congested-city/> (Accessed: 13 October 2025).

The Queensland Productivity Commission has also recently released its interim report into productivity in the construction sector. The key finding we wish to highlight here is that productivity in the Queensland construction industry today is only 5 per cent higher than it was in 1994-95. In comparison, productivity in the market economy grew by 65 per cent³.

Productivity: particularly in a complex and interdependent sector like civil construction is not just a function of equipping workers with better tools or better industrial relations, but also by helping and encouraging better project planning, greater logistical cohesion and supply chain management.

Queensland is also set to fall short of its housing target by 96,000 by 2029⁴. Housing construction is entirely dependent on civil works. Subdivisions cannot progress and houses cannot be built until the land is prepared, utilities are connected, and roads are built. Analysts at UNSW Business School note that “*delays in infrastructure projects are stalling*” planned housing, even where rezoning and approvals are in place. This is important to note in the context of accelerating house prices over the past five years, with enormous growth trajectory out to 2030. Making civil construction more productive and efficient is key to tackling this challenge.

Similarly, councils face significant challenges as the scale and complexity of the task of asset investment and management continues to grow. A recent report by the Local Government Association of Queensland (“LGAQ”) highlights an estimated \$19 billion in statewide replacement cost of assets in poor condition, function and capacity⁵.

This enormous impetus to build and maintain infrastructure requires a multi-pronged solution, this includes improvements to procurement, planning and supply chains. The Bill goes some way to help ensuring better project planning and driving input costs into infrastructure down. We will outline below the important ways we hope the Bill will achieve this.

Early Contractor Involvement & Conflicts of Interest

We note the Bill intends to substantially reform the conflicts of interest framework to encourage a focus on local government meetings where decisions are made and remove the concept of a close personal relationship, to allow councillors more autonomy to engage with people in the community, contractors and other stakeholders. From a CCF QLD perspective, we have had repeated anecdotal feedback that the current regime has had the express effect of severely limiting the capacity of contractors to engage with councillors

³ Queensland Productivity Commission (2025) *Summary Report - Opportunities to improve productivity of the construction industry*. Brisbane: Queensland Productivity Commission. Available at: <https://qpc.qld.gov.au/docs/construction-productivity/Summary%20Report%20-%20Opportunities%20to%20improve%20productivity%20of%20the%20construction%20industry%201.pdf> (Accessed: 5 November 2025).

⁴ Tilley, E. (2025, March 17). Housing crisis failure: 96,000 homes short of Qld target. <https://www.realestate.com.au/news/housing-crisis-failure-96000-homes-short-of-qld-target/>

⁵ Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) (2025) *Queensland State of the Assets Report 2025*. Available at: <https://www.lgaq.asn.au/files/assets/public/v/1/advocacy/publications-files/queensland-state-of-the-assets-report-2025.pdf> (Accessed: 8 December 2025).

and council officers around projects without fear of reprisal or enlivening the overly onerous conflicts regime. This has likely contributed to substantially poorer outcomes across the State.

The importance of early contractor involvement in delivering better outcomes is well understood in other spheres of civil contracting, particularly with Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads. The “collaborative contracting” model developed with industry, which is scalable, is seen as beneficial by both TMR as the client and contractors.

Councils, particularly larger councils, are increasingly engaging in large, complex projects that require significant expertise. From a client and contractor perspective, there are a variety of benefits to early contractor involvement which cannot be understated.

A key component of the collaborative contracting model, early contractor involvement (“ECI”) helps foster collaboration and communication, reducing friction and building a relationship between contractors and clients. Project delivery is strengthened when there is alignment between designers, subcontractors, suppliers and community stakeholders. The enhanced synergy ECI offers should be seen as an important opportunity stemming from the passage of this Bill.

ECI also helps all parties better manage and allocate risk throughout projects. Once a project reaches a certain level of complexity, it is almost inevitable that an unknown and complicating factor will emerge throughout the construction life cycle. A clearly structured contract that defines very specifically rights and obligations, fees, the scope of works and schedules, created through deep collaboration is going to help deliver risk allocation that in the long run benefits all parties.

ECI also provides a forum to build a relationship to help ensure that costs are managed as best as possible across complex projects. Often when issues arrive in project delivery, costs escalate and without an obvious path to issue management. Clear understanding and two-way communication can prove invaluable in ensuring cost control is managed as project face often unexpected delays or issues. ECI helps ensure that communication around these matters is strong, ultimately leading to better outcomes⁶.

ECI also injects expertise earlier into projects, ultimately helping improve design, management and strategy. It is a win-win for clients and contractors, and we hope the reform of these conflict-of-interest provisions encourage this process to become the “de-facto” norm across local government contracting in Queensland.

We believe reform of these provisions is a positive change and should help the state collectively deliver on its burgeoning infrastructure demand. CCF QLD believes that the removal of these barriers is merely a necessary precursor to the widespread adoption of ECI. The new framework gives councils the permission to collaborate but does not provide the incentive or instruction to do so. To ensure councils fully adopt modern,

⁶ WT Partnership (2022) 'Getting the best from ECI procurement', *WT Partnership*, 28 July. Available at: <https://wtpartnership.com.au/insights/getting-the-best-from-eci-procurement/#:~:text=With%20the%20challenges%20of%20COVID,contractor%20and%20their%20respective%20subcon>tractors. (Accessed: 10 December 2025).

collaborative contracting models like ECI, the State Government should help provide guidance and support for ECI across Queensland councils.

Quarrying

We note that current production of quarry materials is projected around 24 million tonnes per annum over the next three years in South-East Queensland. Projected demand is forecast to be around 26 million tonnes per annum, with this 2 million tonne shortfall likely to have a significant impact on housing and infrastructure construction. Given demand for materials is accelerating with the need to deliver Olympic infrastructure, without intervention, this problem could become worse.

The regulation of quarry production is controlled by multiple departments and agencies within the State Government. We are of the view that new quarries are needed, particularly in key locations, and for the productive capacity of existing quarries to be increased where possible. Quarries provide the essential raw materials needed to deliver infrastructure and put simply; you cannot build a bridge or a road out of thin air. There needs to be sufficient raw materials, in all locations across Queensland to construct the infrastructure the state so desperately needs.

This shortfall is of particular concern given programs around upgrades to the Bruce Highway and their reliance, oftentimes, on local quarries to fulfil their material needs. Upgrading this road is critical to the State's economic and social future and cannot be delayed due to a dearth of material. The lack of local supply forces contractors to source materials from distant quarries, dramatically increasing haulage costs and exacerbating congestion on arterial roads like the Bruce Highway, the very road we are trying to upgrade. Giving Councils easier access to materials should help alleviate this shortfall. Whilst it is not a silver bullet, we hope that the ability for councils to have easier access to materials drives further investment and production in quarry materials and alleviates existing market pressures.

Conclusion

This Bill should provide some demonstrable material gains in the productivity and efficiency in the broader civil construction sector. In a complex, interdependent industry like civil construction, every needle that can be moved to drive the industry towards its goals need to be moved. We are pleased to support this Bill as an organisation and hope to see further reform to help the civil construction sector flourish.

Kind regards,



Damian Long
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