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State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee
 Queensland Parliament
 Parliament House
 Brisbane QLD 4000
 (via email: sdiic@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Sustainable Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 (Qld)

I am writing to object to changes proposed in the SPOLA Bill, particularly in relation to the awarding of costs in the Planning and Environment Court (P&E Court).

The proposed change to cost orders is an affront to fair-minded Queenslanders. The right to a “fair go” is central to our Australian way of life and it would be devastating if a “reduction in red tape” translated to an unchallenged pathway for developers in Queensland. I am sure that this is not the intention of the proposed change, but it could well be the outcome given the likelihood that community groups and everyday people will, understandably, balk at the prospect of becoming involved in P&E court processes due to the possibility of costs being awarded against them. One could sympathise with that position, and any decision to err on the side of caution, no matter how meritorious the argument or how compelling the expert advice.

Koala Diaries is involved in wildlife conservation efforts in Queensland. We are not opposed to development but, rather, committed to ensuring that there is a balance achieved between the preservation of our natural assets, particularly our biodiversity, and the expansion of our built environment. Queensland has not achieved a balance to date, and has arguably the worst track record of any state in Australia with respect to wildlife conservation. A model of sustainability is only an aspirational ideal in Queensland. That the balance could tip further away from that ideal is a frightening prospect indeed.

I respectfully request that the Committee undertakes an urgent re-think in respect to the current proposal.

Yours sincerely

Carolyn Beaton
 Co-founder – Koala Diaries (www.koaladiaries.com.au)