STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND WORKS COMMITTEE

Mr JJ McDonald MP—Chair
Ms JM Bush MP
Mr TA James MP
Mr D Kempton MP
Mr CG Whiting MP
Mr BJ Mellish MP

Staff present:
Ms S Galbraith—Committee Secretary
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PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE PLANNING (SOCIAL IMPACT AND COMMUNITY BENEFIT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2025

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Monday, 9 June 2025

Brisbane

MONDAY, 9 JUNE 2025

The committee met at 9.31 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open this public hearing for the inquiry into the Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. My name is Jim McDonald. I am the member for Lockyer and chair of the committee. With me here today are: Ms Jonty Bush, member for Cooper and deputy chair; Mr Terry James, member for Mulgrave; Mr David Kempton, member for Cook; Mr Chris Whiting, member for Bancroft, who is substituting for the member for Kurwongbah; and Mr Bart Mellish, member for Aspley.

The purpose of today's hearing is to assist the committee with its examination of the Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The bill was referred to the committee for detailed consideration and report. This hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading parliament is a serious offence. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee.

These proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website and social media pages. Please remember to press your microphone on before you speak and turn it off when you are finished as only a few of the microphones work at once. Also please turn your mobiles off or onto silent mode.

BAKER, Ms Crystal, Manager, Strategic Policy, Local Government Association of Queensland

GRONOLD, Mr Morgan, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Remote Area Planning and Development Board (via videoconference)

LEMAN, Mr Matthew, Lead, Planning and Development Policy, Local Government Association of Queensland

SMITH, Ms Alison, Chief Executive Officer, Local Government Association of Queensland

CHAIR: Welcome. Would you like to make an opening statement? Then the committee will have questions for you.

Ms Smith: Thank you for the opportunity to speak with the committee today. I would like to firstly acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we gather and pay my respects to elders past and present. My name is Alison Smith. I am the CEO of the Local Government Association of Queensland. Joining me today are Crystal Baker, who is our Manager of Strategic Policy, and Matt Leman, who is our Lead for Planning and Development Policy. Also online we have Morgan Gronold. He is the acting CEO of RAPAD, which is the Central-Western Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board. Thank you for allowing us to have Morgan join.

As you know, the Local Government Association of Queensland is the peak body for all councils across the state. We were set up 129 years ago to support and provide advice to our members. In representing councils today, we have based our submission on the renewable energy components of this bill, so really focusing on what the bill strives to do in terms of helping identify, avoid, manage and offset the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of renewable energy projects in communities.

We welcome this bill as a significant step forward. The community benefit system is one that responds directly to the calls of Queensland councils that have been made via resolutions to our annual conferences over consecutive years. This committee has already heard of the significant

social impacts that come with renewable energy projects. We are really grateful that the bill recognises those impacts and will actually work to give power back to Queensland councils and their communities. We feel that the bill enables local government, as the level of government closest to the community, to secure community benefits for their regions which we hope will last for generations to come.

In closing, we are supportive of this bill. Our submission makes some 14 recommendations. I would like to thank the committee for allowing us the opportunity to speak today. I would also like to invite Morgan to say a few words about the work they have been doing and particularly show the grassroots application opportunity that this bill provides.

Mr Gronold: As indicated, RAPAD is the regional organisation of councils for the seven local government areas here in the central west. We cover about 25 per cent of Queensland and we initiated the RAPAD power grid as an economic development opportunity for our region in partnership with VisIR, the Queensland-based electricity company and development partner.

Community benefit and consultation are at the heart of our RAPAD power grid development strategy. In 2024 we commenced investigations to support a CBRA, a community benefit royalty agreement, that would establish a framework of agreement of financial benefits to communities impacted by that RAPAD power grid. It was endorsed by the RAPAD Board in October 2024. Flinders Shire Council has also come on and endorsed that as part of a pre-emptive and region-wide community benefit scheme.

As part of this investigation, in May 2024 RAPAD organised a study visit to Texas for RAPAD mayors and councillors and the then director-general of the department of environment and climate to learn from regional communities about renewable energy growth. The focus was really on stability for ranches or landholders there, diversifying community income sources and community benefits from inward investment around job creation and tax revenues. What we found is that the Texas local government has significantly more influence and participation over the development of energy infrastructure including renewable energy development than local governments have here in Queensland. Despite this and with no mandated emissions reduction targets, Texas is the location of more wind and solar development and the investment that flows from that than any other state in the US. For us, the experience of Texas demonstrates that strengthening the influence of, and the accountability to, local government and their communities of renewable energy developers does in no way hinder investment.

In our collective experience, renewable energy developers and investors do have a genuine intention to provide benefit to community. However, in many cases that we are familiar with, the clarification and formal commitment to community benefit payments and other undertakings is left until very late in the development process, which really creates uncertainty and inhibits community-led decision-making about priorities and investments. We feel that the government's bill addresses this issue by ensuring that community benefit agreements must be in place at the front of the development process, which is really valuable for communities and local governments like ours.

As part of our CBRA we undertook detailed research including discussions with regional councils and mayors in other regions of Queensland and those impacted by renewable energy zones in New South Wales in what became our RAPAD CBRA that was signed last year. We feel that some of the reason this legislation is now necessary is that some members of the renewable energy industry have so far had an inability to better partner with the community or with the communities in which they want their projects to reside. We appreciate the opportunity to present this morning.

Mr WHITING: The Equal Partners in Government Agreement, which was signed in March this year, commits the state to early and genuine consultation with local governments on policy and legislative reforms. We have heard concerns from some councils that they were not consulted before this bill was introduced. Does the bill live up to the commitments made in that agreement and, if not, what could have been done better?

Ms Smith: Certainly this bill is a direct response to what councils have been asking for years. As I mentioned in my opening statement, we have had consecutive annual conference resolutions that all led to what this bill has sought to incorporate. As the peak body for councils, we were consulted for about six weeks over that period in relation to the bill. We did not see the statutory instruments within the bill, but we were consulted heavily in relation to the position of councils, the resolutions that have been put forward and what the desire of councils was to be included in this. I think it is always the case that when you have effective planning outcomes you have to have that level of consultation, so we were pleased with what we participated in.

Mr WHITING: Just on the statutory instruments in the bill, can you describe those ones that you had not seen?

Ms Smith: I might defer to Matt Leman to answer that.

Mr Leman: We were consulted on the kind of core principals and what we could expect to see, but we certainly did not see the draft bill, the draft regulation or the draft instruments that sit under it.

Mr KEMPTON: Thank you for your submissions. They are very thorough and very useful. In both cases you support community benefit agreements and, in the case of the LGAQ, you talk about consequences for noncompliance. I am wondering what your thoughts are on performance guarantees, in terms of both those things that they are obligated to do under the CBA and decommissioning at the end, given that the power companies have all the resources and usually the landholders do not.

Ms Smith: I might defer to Morgan online for this particular answer. Morgan, are you comfortable to answer this?

Mr Gronold: Certainly. I concur that local government and especially councils have quite finite resources and often limited expertise in a negotiation of complex or bespoke commercial agreements. We would encourage the government to provide facilitation and funding to support regional councils as they build their capacity to negotiate CBAs to ensure that the agreements not only provide clarity for both parties but also are effective and risk-free for councils and reflect a good deal for the community. We can look to those agreements that were made in other states but also in Texas, especially around issues regarding decommissioning—that became a large issue for those early wind farms and developments that were delivered in West Texas—which have now been overcome through improved agreements.

Ms BUSH: Thank you for coming along and for your submissions—your written submission as well—recognising that you, of course, are the peak body representing councils. We have received submissions from 13 councils right throughout Queensland who, I would say, support the intent of the bill but have raised significant issues with a lot of the details of this particular bill as drafted, particularly around the timing of the social impact assessment, the CBA and the case-by-case assessment process rather than a regional process. Would amendments that deal with those two issues make this more workable for councils, as they have suggested in their submissions?

Ms Smith: I might start in response and then ask Matt Leman to make some additional comments. When we look at the bill, we do not see that it creates additional burden. What it does do for councils is add a community benefit negotiation role for them. That is something that they want to do. It is something that is really important for them because, as I said in my opening remarks, there is no level of government closer to the community than councils, they know their communities and it is an important move for them. It does move the development assessment responsibility from councils to the state government, so that is welcomed.

There is also some flexibility within the bill. Councils can in their work determine whether a social impact assessment is or is not needed, so they have that ability to work within the framework, and that really comes down to what their community's views and needs are. We as the LGAQ are committed to work with the state government in relation to any supplementary materials. Already we have identified that for councils there should be some strong guidelines and templates, and we would be happy to work with the state government to produce those. Matt, is there anything you would like to add?

Mr Leman: Sure, and I might throw to Morgan for the question about the front-loading of the CBA and SIA because I know that he mentioned that in his opening remarks.

Ms BUSH: Yes. Morgan, I was interested in that because I think your submission says something different to what you have said today in this proceeding around the timing of the CBA.

Mr Gronold: Thank you, member, with regard to the front-loading. My summary this morning was just taken from the submission that we made this morning. With regard to the front-loading, I think that is in an effort to ensure clarity from both community and developer. Part of the challenge that we have here that you may have seen from the other submissions is that it is difficult to understand exactly what the proponents are suggesting when there is that, I suppose, non-standardised process. A community may have several proponents coming in all offering slightly different things with regard to what that is, so I think there is an opportunity, again where councils have finite resources, for proponents to be held accountable for their use of funds and how it is going to be developed. I am not sure if this is quite answering your question, and I am happy to try to provide more information at a later date.

Ms BUSH: No, that is okay. I guess I am sensing a disconnect between your position today and the positions of the 13 councils. I am just curious as to what engagement you have had and consultation you have undertaken with those councils because they have been quite clear and consistent that the bill at the moment is unworkable for them, in that timing of the CBA particularly.

Mr Gronold: I apologise: I can only comment on my seven councils in RAPAD and our submission. I am unaware of what has been asked by those other 13 at this stage, I am sorry.

Mr Leman: If it is all right, I can jump in with a little bit of extra context. Absolutely there is a variety of views around when the most beneficial time to do a CBA and a CIA would be. From talking to our member councils about that, there is a lot of concern around a project changing throughout the life cycle. There is a recognition that what you might agree to in a community benefit agreement and what might get decided can change, so something that we have called for in our recommendations is a clarity around how that process would work and how those negotiations will recommence and be live throughout the process.

One of the benefits which other councils see in the front-loading process is that they retain their say. A local government and a proponent have to enter into that community benefit agreement before a development application can be lodged, so that really retains councils in the driver's seat of negotiating and deciding what does and does not occur in their local community and under what circumstances. So there is that variety of views, but we would probably see either direction as being manageable.

Mr JAMES: Alison, does the proposed bill cover the intent of those 14 resolutions that were passed at the annual conferences—all 14?

Ms Smith: Broadly yes but, as I have already alluded to, there are some areas where we would like to continue working with the state. We think councils need the support of having some templates, some guidelines and so on, so that needs to be included. We also think batteries needs to be scoped out, because at the moment the bill is pertaining to have, I guess, a different assessment of batteries. The analogy I would make for that is that you are seeking a development approval for a house and you have one level of government looking at three rooms in a house and another level of government looking after the rest of it. We think that will cause some confusion and some coordination issues down the track, so we would like to work with the government around a next stage of having that assessment be more uniform. There are certainly some areas of the bill that we think could be better reflective of our members. Matt, is there anything further you would like to add?

Mr Leman: Thanks, Alison. I would just say that the bill, I guess, establishes that framework and then there will be a range of supporting instruments, which our resolutions also relate to, that we can work through as partners in government to see that those resolutions are followed through.

Mr MELLISH: Alison, we have heard from some renewable energy proponents at this committee who have said that this would effectively delay projects by six to 12 months, add to their cost and make them less viable and less likely to get up. Are renewable projects now an important part of the regional economy and what would be the impact on many of these communities if that investment was significantly reduced or taken out of Queensland?

Ms Smith: Our position is that we do not see that this bill should be viewed as making it harder on renewable projects. Renewable projects are the next wave of economic opportunity for our state. Our councils support that strongly. We would be more concerned, if this bill was not there, about what that would do to communities—have them fractured in a situation without frameworks and without certainty—and that would make it even harder for proponents of renewable energy to go forward. There is no doubt that already, and certainly since the advent of this bill, the renewable sector is making endeavours towards community benefits. That is work that is starting. I believe the committee has already heard evidence of that, so legislating councils' role to negotiate community benefits should not be seen as an imposition. It is already happening, but this is about cementing that and making it very established and understood. We are just seeking with our councils, and representative of their views, that renewable energy development is done in a considered way that is always taking into account the host communities.

CHAIR: Thank you for your advocacy on behalf of the local governments. We have already heard from a broad range of local governments in terms of their experience with renewable energy projects, both good actors and bad actors. Can you share with the committee what the experience for local government has been like in that context, before this bill has come about, for large-scale renewable projects?

Ms Smith: I thank the chair for the question. If it is all right with you, I would like to hear from Morgan. He has been very much at the front line in this.

CHAIR: Over to you, Morgan.

Mr Gronold: Reflecting on an earlier statement with regard to this bill and how it will impact on ongoing future development, I think we are very lucky in the RAPAD region in that we are quite a unique community-led development. We have gone out with our RAPAD power grid proposal—that is, gone to the community and led that and gone to partners seeking to deliver it. What we feel has happened in other communities is that this potential economic investment has been thrust upon them. If I use an example of somewhere like Biloela, we hear from Mayor Nev Ferrier there that—and I may have these numbers wrong—there are upwards of 25 or 30 proposed wind developments in that community currently. I think it is very difficult for that community to have a good understanding of what those outcomes will mean. That has the potential of one shire hall meeting a fortnight of someone coming in and outlining what that will mean for their community.

Certainly when we developed our CBRA—and I can only speak for our community and those proponents that have discussed it with us—many developers have been very thankful that we have provided some clarity in how our communities are seeking to partner with them over what is a very long marriage. In terms of the earlier comment about delays, this bill may delay the development of a project by, say, 12 months, as one of the members mentioned earlier, but, to my mind, the analogy is that that is a slightly longer engagement period which will lead to a much more satisfying long-term marriage over the next 35 to 50 years, which is approximately how long these projects will deliver.

Again, I would reinforce that, from our community's perspective and from the developers that have spoken to us, something like our CBRA and the intention of this bill is to simply provide clarity to developers and their investors and to communities about what is being developed when and what the benefit is for both parties in what will be an ongoing, long marriage.

CHAIR: Thanks, Morgan. Morgan has outlined to us a community-led development that has been positive because of that engagement, and obviously the people involved with that are participating in that. Can you give the committee a sense, though, of the experience that other councils have had in terms of the lack of social licence and community benefit?

Ms Smith: All of our advocacy in the development of this bill and in previous years has always been focused on what our members have told us are the concerns they wish to address. Large-scale renewable energy projects can have significant impacts. They include things like loss of agricultural land, visual amenity, noise, impact on road infrastructure, biosecurity risks and dividing communities, so these are all the elements that councils have put forward in their motions. That is what we have brought forward in our advocacy on their behalf. Does that answer your question?

CHAIR: Yes. Thank you very much, Alison.

Mr WHITING: Would the LGAQ support the extension of the community benefit agreement framework to major non-renewable energy projects?

Ms Smith: I thank the member for the question; it is an interesting one. We do not have a position from our members on that. We are always member-led and evidence-based and I am sorry, but I do not have a position on that that I can bring to you today.

Mr WHITING: There are many sizeable non-renewable energy projects happening throughout the area.

Ms Smith: Yes.

Ms Baker: Just to add some context to that, in Queensland we have seen the Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Act in effect for many years. That does set up the social impact assessment framework for major projects—things like mining and extractive resources. That is a strong policy position of Queensland councils. It is in our LGAQ policy statement as something that we really want to manage in terms of workforce impacts and housing impacts of these major projects. We are aware that there are multiple frameworks sitting across multiple different state agencies, and that is why one of our recommendations in our submission is around whole-of-government coordination.

Mr WHITING: Certainly that would make it stronger. You have talked about the SIA, but if there is a CBA framework on top of that to mirror that that would certainly make it better for local communities.

Ms Baker: Yes.

Mr KEMPTON: Just on the question of frameworks, if you try to develop a framework prior to the legislation being enacted and given the multiple different variations of communities, projects and so on, do you think that could restrict the process rather than allow a framework to evolve after people have started negotiating and you have some cases to work from?

Ms Smith: This is a circumstance where every level of government has a different role. It all comes down to planning, ultimately. What this bill does do is acknowledge there are different roles and unique responsibilities in the levels of governance. We know that local governments know their communities best. They are not just stakeholders; they are actually planning partners in this. Meanwhile, the state government, through having the advice of local government that this bill is affording, is able to undertake that detailed development. For us, it is about having local government in the driver's seat ahead of development applications, making sure they are not being lodged until that CBA is in place. I will defer to my colleagues for anything further.

Mr Leman: I think the way the bill has been drafted does allow for quite a lot of flexibility in what can happen. At the moment it does assume or at least accounts for a case-by-case social impact assessment and CBA process, but it does not necessarily prescribe that that is the only way it can be done. If a council wants to proactively do that work and create a social baseline, or even on a regional scale, there is nothing in the bill which would stop that from happening, so it is quite flexible in allowing for that framework to develop.

Mr KEMPTON: I think 'flexibility' is the key word.

Mr MELLISH: We have heard from landholders about the importance of protecting prime agricultural land and remnant vegetation; however, there is nothing in the bill that requires decision-makers to consider those impacts. Would a regional planning approach help better manage these as the projects come up?

Ms Smith: Crystal Baker would like to answer this one, thanks.

Ms Baker: Absolutely. Prime agricultural land is the heart of regional, rural and remote communities across Queensland. For many years, councils have raised with us the land use conflicts that can occur between agricultural land and large-scale renewable energy developments. We have a productive working relationship with the department in drafting subordinate materials and things like the state development assessment provisions that would apply to the assessment of these large-scale renewable energy facilities. There are some provisions in there relating to the protection of agricultural land, which is welcome. We do want to see those strengthened, but we are heartened by the productive working relationship as we continue to make amendments to that SDAP code before it takes effect.

CHAIR: Surely, through the consultation with local government and the development of the community benefit agreement, those councils could drive the developers towards the issues that the member for Aspley raised. Would that be accurate?

Ms Baker: In terms of driving them towards the agricultural land, can I just ask—

CHAIR: It would be to make sure that the community's expectations in those areas are met. If there is vulnerable vegetation or other issues, they could be focusing on that.

Ms Baker: Absolutely, yes. Thank you for the clarification. That is something that we do see in this bill. As local government we would have a seat at the table in those negotiations, the state government would be able to assess those impacts, the community would be able to have a say through consultation and then those social impacts could be managed and enacted.

CHAIR: Thank you all for appearing today. There are no questions on notice, so you do not have any homework. Thank you very much. I hope you have a great rest of the day. Good to see you all again.

COX, Mr Doug, Redlands2030 Inc.

MacDONALD, Mr Steven, President, Redlands2030 Inc.

SPENCE, Mr Ross, Treasurer, Birkdale Progress Association

WEISMANTEL, Mr Robert, Secretary, Birkdale Progress Association

CHAIR: I now welcome representatives from the Birkdale Progress Association. Just for the committee's benefit, Steven and I were on the Regional Landscape Strategy Advisory Committee back in 2001, or thereabouts. Good to see you. Good morning, gentlemen. Would you like to make a brief opening statement and then the committee will have questions for you?

Mr Spence: Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee and to make known the views of my organisation—the Birkdale Progress Association—on this matter. I have a summary of our submission that will take a few minutes to read out, if you will permit.

CHAIR: Over to you, Ross.

Mr Spence: The Birkdale Progress Association strongly objects to the proposed legislation. The aim of the legislation, it seems, is to deprive citizens of the right to challenge the government's bad decisions over Olympic venues. Of particular concern to us is the proposed whitewater stadium in Birkdale. It has been forced upon the people of Redland City. We never asked for it. Three samples of local public opinion have unequivocally given the proposal the thumbs down.

A whitewater stadium is the short straw of Olympic venues. No other city has found a way to make one financially viable. It is folly in the extreme for Redland City, or the Queensland government, to think they will be different. Previous Olympic cities are littered with abandoned or heavily subsidised stadiums that are an ongoing burden to city or state budgets. Australia's current whitewater stadium is in Penrith, New South Wales. It was built for the 2000 Sydney Olympics and is the home of the fabulous Fox sisters, Australia's Olympic champions. Penrith City Council was rescued by the New South Wales government, which took over financial responsibility for the loss-making stadium in 2023, I think. We can save the federal and state governments about $50 million each by not constructing a local duplicate facility and by simply using the existing Penrith stadium. Similarly, we can save the Redland City Council millions of dollars in site infrastructure costs.

I just want to touch on the IOC New Norm policy, which is clearly at odds with what is going on here. The New Norm policy aims to protect host cities from unreasonable costs and ongoing financial burden. The IOC says, 'Do not build a new stadium when an alternative one exists, even if it's in another state or country.' The existing facility at Penrith clearly should be used. The New Norm policy also says, 'Do not locate an Olympic facility adjacent to areas of significant cultural or natural heritage.' The Redland's whitewater stadium is to be built next to two state heritage listed icons—Willards Farm and the World War II radio receiving station. It is also next to bushland that is home to endangered wildlife, including koalas and greater gliders.

By setting aside these laws and the protections they afford, the state government is choosing to deny democracy and the rights of communities everywhere to have a voice. Clearly, we will be unable to protect our precious green spaces and the wildlife there-in. We will be unable to protect our Indigenous and European cultural heritage, and we will be unable to protect our quality of life. The Crisafulli government broke an election promise to not build any new stadiums. This proposed legislation adds insult to injury. That is the view of the Birkdale Progress Association.

CHAIR: Thank you, Ross. I will go to Steve for an opening address. Thank you.

Mr MacDonald: Ladies and gentlemen, Redlands2030—R2030—is a non-profit community organisation advocating for improved liveability, sustainability and accountability in the Redland City Council area. We are best known for opposing the Toondah Harbour PDA. It was a development that was going to deliver many so-called benefits. Our efforts were vindicated by the federal Minister for the Environment when she rejected the EIS two years ago.

Our efforts, in alliance with a number of state, local and national groups, led to 27,000 formal submissions and a petition signed by 75,000 people. It was a rejection of the whole PDA process, which had many of the same elements as this legislation. The Redlands community has a long and proud record of fighting for wildlife and the environment generally. Great frustration is felt by many about the demise of the koalas in our city. Once the emblem of the city, they have fallen prey to relentless destruction of their habitat in the name of progress and so-called balanced development.

Here we have yet another attack. Communities do have opinions and feelings about where they live. These qualities are not easily expressed and are not properly recognised in planning terms or in plannerese, which is the jargon that planners and, with due respect, their political masters use. The submissions of 27,000 people and 75,000 petitioners are real evidence of community concerns, but those concerns are largely dismissed in the planning system.

The rushed process for this bill fails to meet the standard for accountability and transparency that Queenslanders deserve. After reviewing the bill, we would like to raise a few concerns outside of our formal submission. The first issue I would raise is the property rights. The removal of a landowner's right of appeal is a denial of their property rights. I find it hard to believe that the current government, in particular, can accept those changes. Many people do not see those changes, and I do not think the changes have been properly communicated, particularly to landowners. In the case of the Toondah development, an irate cohort of people who live near the development to this day probably do not realise that they have no rights of appeal under a PDA process or under this legislation. That is a denial of property rights, in our view.

Values based planning is at the heart of modern planning, and all too often planning mechanisms do not respect or respond to submissions and petitions. It certainly does not take into account that people are not able to express their views on planning. People are guarded. They feel ill-equipped or just shy to do it. It is a problem for us, despite the 27,000 submissions, and it is a problem that governments should recognise: that people do not necessarily play by the rules of the planners. Unless correctly interpreted public confidence in planning will fail, trust in government will be adversely impacted and a 'why bother' syndrome will apply to most people.

The third issue relates to a sense of place. People know what they like. They value it and they feel it, but to articulate it in planning terms is near impossible. With due respect, most planners do not even acknowledge it. For example, the presence of koalas is not just a biodiversity question, which many people try to argue and planners try to respond to; seeing a koala in the Redlands is an uplifting experience. It is actually a highly valued experience by the people who live there and by the many people who visit. It is not just a biodiversity question; it is about liveability and the quality of life. Likewise, walking in the footsteps of important people or even our Indigenous cultures is an experience, a feeling; it is not something that planning can identify through its heritage category. People know Cleveland's village feel, for example, or its park-like atmosphere, but there is no equivalent in the planning system.

The assessment of submissions is our fourth point. The legislative changes or the planning that we have seen undervalue the pro forma submissions and petitions that people tend to want to use. They find them easier to respond to, yet we have seen pro formas rejected, saying there is only one submission because it is a pro forma. I make this point to each of you: you have probably been elected on a pro forma basis. We actually make a choice on a pro forma voting slip; we do not actually make our own.

On the renewable energy issues, the provisions that constrain renewable energy development contradict, in our view, Queensland's commitment to addressing the climate crisis. The Olympic projects from the environmental and planning safeguards undermine good governance, in our view. In the Redlands roughly 75 per cent of the community oppose the whitewater facility. It is a clear signal of an inadequate or non-existent social licence, yet our local MPs all claim community support for the project. It is a nonsense.

We actually think the new powers are redundant. Queensland's planning legislation already allows for ministerial designations of major projects, so creating new pathways is unnecessary and serves to diminish the hard-earned capacity of the community in learning the planning process. It often happens that the rules get changed halfway through, or not even halfway through. We would recommend that the bill be withdrawn and that we use existing laws and show respect for community values. A failure to deliver an Olympic venue on time risks embarrassment. A failure to deliver climate related outcomes in a timely manner is a risk to our way of life.

Ms BUSH: Thank you, gentlemen, for coming along today and for your submissions. I am happy for my question to be taken by either Steven or Ross, or both. The Deputy Premier has said that this bill is about giving communities a stronger voice, but you say that your community has not been consulted and, in fact, feels sidelined in relation to Olympic developments. In your view, has the government delivered on its promise to empower local communities through this bill?

Mr MacDonald: I think the answer is no. We can enforce that in a number of ways. In the original selection of the site for the Olympic whitewater facility, I think whitewater rated No. 8 in activities on the site by the community. That was completely ignored by the state government. The

government itself is aware of that because we have made numerous submissions to the government on the basis of that, yet the facility is going ahead, as we understand, on a site which is completely inappropriate. We have done a lot of investigations. We have commissioned our own reports. The risks to the koala habitat as it is are high if the site drains. You cannot construct this industrial-scale development in the middle of a koala habitat area and expect there will be no impacts on the koalas. The whole issue of site impacts, buffering required and edge effects is seemingly, because we have not seen the details, ignored. It is poor planning, essentially.

Ms BUSH: Have your local members briefed your group or engaged with you over this process: the members for Capalaba, Oodgeroo and Redlands?

Mr Weismantel: No, I do not think so, no.

Mr Spence: We had some support from the previous member for Capalaba, but since the election the new members have backed the council in their decision about the siting of the stadium. No, we have not had any joy at all there.

Ms BUSH: I am sorry to hear that.

Mr KEMPTON: Ross, you mentioned that there were cultural heritage sites next to the proposed facility area. Are you able to identify any natural or cultural heritage protection in relation to those values within the site that you talked about? The second part of the question is: are there any other sites in the Birkdale community precinct where you might welcome an Olympic Games facility?

Mr Spence: The site for the stadium is part of the so-called Birkdale precinct of about 62 hectares. Sorry, I have forgotten the initial question.

Mr KEMPTON: Let me be clearer. In relation to the 62 hectares, you said there are existing heritage sites adjacent to the site. If these values exist within the site, are there any protections in place in respect of those values—inside the 62 hectares?

Mr Spence: Yes, sorry. There are two historic sites that are on the state heritage list. Our organisation was a prime mover in gaining state heritage listing of Willards Farm, which is one of the first farms in the district—one of the first in South-East Queensland, for that matter—soon after the newly formed Queensland government started trying to attract people to the former colony. Willards Farm is there. It has been restored by the council. We actually saved it from demolition. It was slated to be part of a development for housing. That got stopped. It is now on the heritage list so that affords some protection. The other facility is the World War II US Army radio receiving station, which, similarly, was granted listing on the state heritage list several years ago. I might add that, despite the listing, part of that facility has been dismantled—one of the aerials which was part of the heritage list has been taken down—so we are rather displeased about that.

Mr MELLISH: Ross, with the effective removal of the heritage protections as part of this bill, what are your main concerns around the environmental values on the site and the heritage listed places on the site as a result of this bill?

Mr Spence: The common theme for the site is water. There are natural aquifers on the site. The aquifers sustain healthy bushland. The area is well watered. It was a meeting place for local Aboriginal tribes way back. It is the reason for the successful farm site of Willards Farm. There is permanent groundwater there, even though the surrounding streams are brackish. The water provided what was described as a damp earth mat, all the better for receiving radio as part of the US Army radio receiving station. It is a somewhat swampy site, plenty of water, and that is good for radio reception. That is what the place looks like. We strongly object to industrial-scale development and construction in the ground of a whitewater facility and all the other infrastructure that needs to be undergrounded as part of that process. We are fearful that the nature of the place will be totally changed. The environment may suffer from saltwater incursion, and we are fearful for the future of the wildlife, including the healthy colony of koalas that survive.

Mr MacDonald: I would like to take a step away from the details of the site and the site values et cetera, which is the koalas. One of our major concerns is the ongoing management of this facility. It is a $100 million-odd construction that is to be met by the state and Commonwealth governments. The ongoing management is the responsibility of the ratepayers of Redlands. We already have the highest rates in South-East Queensland. We have looked at other like venues, and it is about $2 million-plus a year maintenance cost, for a facility that would probably cater currently for no more than six users of the Redlands population. This is a very minor sport in Queensland. It is a very minor sport in Redlands. We have needs for lots of sporting facilities; a whitewater facility does not rate. You would think a planning system that took into account community values would actually be looking to fill that gap rather than get to some exotic water-based facility which, by the way, needs high skills—

it is highly dangerous to unskilled people—and does not allow for people aged under 18 without supervision. It has all of those sorts of issues which have not been properly addressed through the so-called planning system that this has been exposed to.

Mr WHITING: Ross and Steven, this bill would deprive citizens of the right to challenge the government and also to protect our heritage. How important to both of your groups is the ability to protect the heritage that would be lost in this bill?

Mr Weismantel: Protecting the two sites that are heritage listed was a hard-fought battle by the community over a long period of time. Losing those two sites potentially would be quite a shock to the community. They are quite loved by the community. The previous tenant, Isabella Alcock, known as the 'Goat Lady', often told the story that in wet weather the aquifers run like a river over the land, and from personal experience I can say that when the fog rolls in it is freezing cold. How would that work with wet skin if the fog rolled in at any time?

Mr MacDonald: One of the obvious constraints that should apply is that this is the site that received the notice of the surrender of Japan to Douglas MacArthur after World War II. If this was in any other country in the world, probably it would be a monumental issue. We have taken down one of the signals things that may have been part of receiving that. This year is I think the 80th anniversary of the surrender of Japan, and in Australia we are going to put a mammoth whitewater facility—it is not sensitive to the environment, despite what people say—right next door to perhaps one of the most important places in terms of the surrender of Japan as far as Australia is concerned. Certainly that is a heritage issue, but it is just an example of the failure of the planning system to not even properly recognise that. One hundred million dollars could be spent on celebrating the surrender of Japan and it would be small fry compared to, I guess, what the cost originally was. Going back to the koalas and the site facilities, which is important, does not recognise the overall importance, in my view—socially, historically and in a heritage sense—of the site.

Mr JAMES: Robert or Steven, in your submission you state that all developments for the 2032 Olympics must remain subject to the existing Queensland planning laws. Given that the first 1,200 days were completely wasted by the previous government, time has now run out to get this Olympics underway and built by 2032. You could have had time during those first three years to put submissions in. Were you, in fact, consulted during those first three years?

Mr MacDonald: We have been consulted by our local council and we fought the arguments for the facility. Most of the information that we have asked to see is commercial-in-confidence so we do not know the operating costs, we do not know the construction cost, we do not know the impact in terms of adjacent development that we will see and we do not know the impacts on the koalas completely because the deal is a secret. The Toondah Harbour facility, for example, is hidden behind a commercial-in-confidence agreement between the state government, the local council and the developer. We do not know what the conditions of that agreement are, yet the thing still floats around.

The same sort of tool and vehicle was used by the council to keep the community in the dark on most of these things. The council will not talk about why the thing that came in at No. 8 in terms of preferred use popped up as No. 1 in the council's planning. There are lots of issues we have had some discussions about. We just do not trust the outcome and we have no faith in the decisions that have been made. The activity for the Olympics could be done in Penrith. The next games are in Los Angeles, while the whitewater activities are in Oklahoma—about Melbourne's distance from Brisbane. Even the Americans are not going to put a new whitewater facility in. I just make that point. We could follow the example of our American cousins and move the damn thing somewhere where it is wanted.

CHAIR: Ross, do you have something to add?

Mr Spence: I was just about to make the same point as Steve. As far as delays to Olympic venues is concerned, the very simple solution to the whitewater venue is that the venue already exists in Penrith.

Ms BUSH: We heard from submitters last week that the planning framework in place in Queensland now would be sufficient and would not impede the progress of stadiums being delivered on time and potentially on budget. To the extent that the provisions in this legislation remove the usual approval and review processes, do you think there is a justification from the government in this bill, given the Olympics? Do you think this bill is justified, I guess?

Mr MacDonald: My point would be that the community struggles to keep up with the changes that are being made by the government in planning systems generally. If we could find someone who is versed in planning, that would be a very rare person. When the government changes the rules of engagement, essentially, you disarm the community. It is not necessarily that we are well armed, but

when you change the rules on us it just makes it so hard. The calls for submissions and the calls for responses come endlessly. It is not just this bill. We have about six things running now where we are required to try to respond. We do not have paid employees. We do it all ourselves.

To come here today, we got advice on Thursday. With due respect, it might work for you guys but it does not work well for us. We are all volunteers. No-one here has a job. We come in, in our own time, at our own cost, and the notice is two working days. Seriously—I am not criticising you guys—do you think we can come in, respond and essentially prepare another submission in those sorts of timeframes? I am sorry: we are not super people; we are just quite ordinary people who do not always have the skills that we probably need. To even go and find those skills—the one person I would have liked to talk to about this is actually in England at the moment and I have not had a chance to speak to him. I cannot call him back but, anyway, you get my point.

We are under equipped, we are under pressure and we are responding to four or five live issues at this very moment. Seemingly, the government has no way of coordinating those requests. One of them is interesting: it is an outdoor recreation investigation which might have been useful before we ended up with a whitewater facility. In my past life as a government employee, I developed an outdoor recreation strategy. I can tell you that rowing did not appear in the top 100 activities that we looked at for South-East Queenslanders. It is a very minor sport in terms of activity. I make that point. We need lots of facilities in Redlands. A whitewater facility is not one of them.

CHAIR: Thank you, gentlemen, for representing your community. It is important for me to say that this bill and the amendments in this bill are not about a referendum for the 2032 venues; that was established through the delivery plan. It is very important to note that the bill does still require EPBC approvals and that there is a requirement to consult regarding the cultural heritage management plan. There is an opportunity for us to maximise environmental outcomes and cultural heritage outcomes through the development of this plan. Do you agree that you will have that opportunity?

Mr MacDonald: We would say that we are very suspicious about the outcomes that were delivered. The pressure is to work for the Olympic Games. The way we got to where we are and the secrecy that surrounded this process up to this time has left us uninvolved and quite concerned, and we do not see that necessarily improving. The reason we raised a number of extra issues in terms of planning is that this is the first opportunity we have had to talk at this level to the government about what the planning system does to communities. I think that is a huge failure. It has been a problem for many years. It is not a current government problem; it is a governance problem. To keep going on this path is a significant challenge for the community. The environmental outcomes for South-East Queensland look grim. This is just a part of the process, but a similar process has been used in PDAs across the state. The idea that you can remove so much of the community input by using those tools has become very popular and the community is suffering.

CHAIR: Thank you, Steve. The time for this session has concluded. Thank you for your submissions and for appearing before the committee today. We will now take a short break to have a private committee hearing. We ask that the public gallery be cleared. We will resume very shortly.

Proceedings suspended from 10.34 am to 10.48 am.

HOOPER, Mr Jack, Chief Executive Officer, GEM Energy—RACQ Solar, RACQ

KANE, Dr Michael, Head of Public Policy, RACQ

CHAIR: Welcome. I invite you to make a brief opening statement, after which the committee will have some questions for you.

Dr Kane: The RACQ has no issue with the government's commitment to ensuring appropriate regulation of community consultation on utility-scale renewable energy projects. RACQ's submission is looking for a discrete change to the proposed amendments, specifically regarding the proposed definition of large-scale solar farm in the bill and in the other elements that work with the bill. We want to address what we think is unintended application to commercial/industrial-scale behind-the-meter self-consumption solar installations. I think we need to be very clear that we distinguish between what is a large-scale solar farm, which can be hundreds of megawatts, and a commercial/industrial behind-the-meter installation, which can be below five megawatts.

I would like to share a document to give you an example of what we are typically looking at when we talk about commercial/industrial. What I am showing you is an aerial photograph of the Caneland shopping centre in Mackay. That has a 3.4-megawatt installation done by RACQ Solar. As you can see, it is quite a project. It is spread out across the top of that shopping centre. At the moment, that sort of installation would be included and caught up in this bill, but it should not be, in our view.

We are suggesting an amendment that effectively changes the definition of a large-scale solar farm to increase the capacity threshold from one megawatt to five megawatts and to effectively add a purpose test which distinguishes between utility-scale generation, which is effectively exporting to the grid, and a commercial self-consumption installation such as the one we see with the Caneland shopping centre in Mackay.

The bill sets out a whole range of processes and requirements on large-scale solar farms which will add cost. Those costs to a small-scale behind-the-meter commercial project could be fatal to that project. Using Caneland as an example, these projects come with a lot of additional costs when you are putting them on top of a shopping centre. It is worth noting that it is not just shopping centres; it is also other industries. We have also done installations, for example, at the Rockhampton sewer works. Local governments have been making use of solar installations.

If we add additional costs to these sorts of projects, it will have a negative consequence. It means that businesses and community organisations such as councils will not be able to proceed or will have much higher costs in terms of doing these projects. There is also the time it will take to actually deliver. That then puts Queensland businesses and communities at a disadvantage when it comes to southern states. If you are competing as a meatworks or manufacturing business in Queensland, your energy costs will be higher than in the southern states.

For us at RACQ and RACQ Solar, it has an impact on our business because we use commercial/industrial with our residential. They tend to cycle at different times, so you are able to keep your install teams and your business going because you can mix between commercial/industrial and residential. If we removed commercial/industrial from our business, it would have a major negative impact. We are obviously not the only installer in Queensland. There are many companies operating. The reality is: the business works on the basis that we manage the install but we get local teams to do that work. They are not directly employed by RACQ Solar—they are employed by local contractors in Mackay, Rockhampton, Cairns or Emerald—so we will be damaging local small business if we move this way.

Finally, the intent of this bill and the state code is really not targeted or even looking at commercial/industrial businesses like shopping centres, meatworks or sewer works. It is looking at protecting high-quality agricultural land. It is looking at things like stock routes and major workforce accommodation impacts when you are doing a large-scale project. We humbly ask that an amendment be made to the code to change the megawatt number from one to five. Thank you.

Mr MELLISH: Thank you for your very useful submission. It states that the planning framework in the bill 'would place Queensland businesses at a competitive disadvantage compared to interstate and international competitors'. Your submission mentions an increased project cost by 20 to 40 per cent compared to other states. Can you expand on that a little bit?

Dr Kane: The key point is that the intent of this bill is not to actually go to commercial/industrial or local government installations. The issue is pretty quickly fixed, but if it is not fixed then a business that is looking to reduce its energy bills—and we know that for households and businesses energy

bills are problematic. In regional Queensland we know that it is important that we are able to reduce costs. A lot of businesses, where they can, will install solar. If this bill is not changed, when you go to put in a new solar system you will have to then jump a number of regulatory hurdles in terms of community consultation. If you look at the Mackay Caneland photo, how is anyone ever going to see or notice the solar panels on top? You will notice shade structures at the left-hand side of the picture. They actually stand up higher than the solar panels. No-one would ever talk about having to do community consultation to put up shade structures. I will leave it to Jack to comment on the 20 to 40 per cent.

Mr Hooper: A lot of these projects of between one and five megawatts are dealt with by SMEs. I think the largest SME commercial installed in the country is about $40 million to $50 million in annual turnover, so it is highly fragmented and margins are quite thin in that space. Small businesses do not have the resources or the specialists that can do community consultation, planning and things like that. You would have to either recruit for those resources or bring in contractors to manage that piece.

To give you an example, a one-megawatt rooftop project is circa $1.1 million delivered. That is the total revenue. If you think about margins, you are talking about $150,000 in gross margin, or $200,000 in gross margin maximum. Quite often when you are delivering those projects, you might be looking at a 15 to 17 per cent internal rate of return. The IRR hurdle for most government or businesses is typically that 15 per cent mark. When you start adding in the additional costs of the consultation and then you think about the delay, quite often you are going to end up falling below that IRR hurdle which makes the projects no longer feasible.

In the case of the Mackay shopping centre, we engaged a local contractor to deliver that project. That was in the order of about $1 million in local labour, supporting local electricians and local apprentices. If there was an increase in the cost hurdle there, that project would not have been viable. That is the impact it would have had specifically on that one project. Really, the cost is in the regulatory requirements and the costs that we would have in working through those requirements.

CHAIR: Before I go to the member for Cook for the next question, I will ask the committee if they are happy to grant leave for the tabled document. Leave is granted.

Mr KEMPTON: Gentlemen, how many megawatts is this project?

Mr Hooper: It is 3.4 megawatts.

Mr KEMPTON: If the only requirement is megawatts—given that a lot of these could have social impact and community benefit implications, shouldn't location and area also be considerations? What exists out in the bush concentrated into a city area—it may not necessarily be on a rooftop. Maybe site and location are matters that need to be taken into consideration as well.

Dr Kane: In our submission we have done two elements. One is the size and the other is the purpose test. A purpose test could go to distinguishing between what is a utility-scale project which is seeking to export—it is built and installed effectively to export to the market, to make profit in the national energy market—as distinct from something which is about self-consumption. Almost all commercial/industrial or local government projects are about self-consumption. They are about making that business more cost-effective to operate.

You could do it as a simple threshold test—five megawatts—and you could add a purpose test or you could just leave it as a threshold. Effectively, if you think about it, most of these projects are sitting on rooftop; they are not sitting on ground. There are some projects that do sit on ground. The Rockhampton sewer works is on ground, but it is in the buffer zone. Obviously, a sewer works is a particularly distinct operation that people do not want to have sight of or smell of, so it has a bund around it and it has a row of trees. Again, the nature of that project is that it is effectively isolated in its semi-urban environment.

The key point that I think we are making here is that in terms of a major solar project—it can be even a small solar farm, 50 megawatts—we are talking about 150 or 200 megawatts. In terms of scale, they completely blow these tiny projects out of the water in terms of their impact. I think what we are really saying is that the lower threshold is just too low and we do not see behind-the-meter projects at five; we see them at 3.4.

Ms BUSH: Thank you for coming in today and for your submission. Is it a concern, then, of the RACQ that the bill as drafted, without the amendments that you have talked about, is likely to increase the cost of energy in Queensland and that will have an effect both on household power bills an on businesses in the regions—particularly small business but also your larger retailers and manufacturing entities you have spoken about—and those costs are ultimately going to be passed on to consumers?

Dr Kane: The question for the committee is: where does this provision sit? Is it in the bill or is it in the state code 26? At the moment, the state code 26 does not have a definition, that we can see, of a solar farm in terms of size. We cannot see it in the bill itself. What we can see is from reading the speech from the Minister for Planning which refers to one megawatt or two hectares. The bill itself we have no real issue with. Our issue is very specific to the definition of a solar farm. Where that definition sits is not for us as mere mortals to work out, but what we are saying to the committee and to government is that you need to address the size and definition of a solar farm, because what we are looking at at the moment is an unintended consequence. I think it is the job of the committee to address that unintended consequence.

Ms BUSH: I guess the nature of my question is: without that amendment, if the committee were to proceed and not address that, I think your submission clearly states that Queensland would, disproportionately to other states, have increased energy costs.

Dr Kane: There would be increased energy costs for commercial/industrial businesses in the sense that you as a commercial/industrial business or a local government would not be able to ameliorate your energy costs.

Mr Hooper: If you look at the Caneland shopping centre as an example, they are expecting to save circa $1 million a year in power. Other businesses in regional Queensland are particularly affected by the cost of electricity. It can be one of their major cost inputs in terms of their opex and they are always looking to reduce opex in order to maintain viability. If you were to take that away from them, they would not continue to spend that $1 million.

Shalom College in Bundaberg is another example that is very close to being caught in this. It was not a megawatt; it was 850 kilowatts of PV. That school was going to realise 850 kilowatts of solar and a 1.2-megawatt battery. That system saves them about $350,000 a year in electricity and it has enabled them to be net zero in their scope to emissions. All of the money that they save is reinvested in the school to improve teaching facilities, improve staff and everything in that area. This project is very close to being captured by that. That is the sort of benefit these systems will have. Yes, businesses will see an increase in electricity costs which is going to make them less resilient.

CHAIR: Thank you for clarifying that your submission is just about solar self-consumption for commercial businesses, because the intent of the bill is for solar farms that are standalone, feeding energy into the grid, not the self-consumption ones that there is obviously a concern about. Are you aware of any other examples where your business delivers services that would be captured by this bill, given that context?

Dr Kane: Our business is focused on commercial/industrial. We do not do large-scale solar farms. What you will find is that the industry is really separated into players who are doing large-scale solar farms for power purchase agreements to the national energy market and small-scale commercial/industrial players like ourselves who are focused on schools, shopping centres, manufacturing businesses, businesses that have large energy costs—agribusinesses with refrigeration. They are the typical sorts of clients that we have that do what we would call larger scale C&I solar. That is in that realm. It goes up to around three to four and generally somewhere around 800, 1.2, 1.5. The issue really is that the bill is, as it sets out in the draft code, focused on agricultural land large-scale projects that have an impact on accommodation issues. These projects are largely built by local workers so there is no impact on accommodation.

Mr WHITING: In your submission you state how it disproportionately impacts on these projects in regional areas. If you had been consulted or seen a draft, would that have given you the opportunity to point out that the threshold going up to five megawatts is a problem?

Dr Kane: I think this is the consultation process as we see it. We welcome the opportunity to make our submission. We have been aware of this from other industry players who have been involved in the consultation process.

Mr WHITING: More so in the drafting of the bill.

Dr Kane: I am unsure where the definition of solar farm is in the bill. It is a very hard bill to read, I must admit. What we have seen is that the code is where the definition is proposed to go, but it is actually silent or empty at the moment. The introductory speech is where we picked up the science of the solar farm. Excuse my ignorance in terms of how this process is working through, but what we have identified is that there is an unintended issue and we would like that resolved. We welcome this opportunity to inform you of the issue.

CHAIR: Certainly, we will make sure that is well clarified for you. It is certainly not the intent. That is why it is large-scale solar with feed-in. The time for this session has now ended. Thank you for your submission. Thank you for being here with the committee today. I hope you have an enjoyable today.

SMITH, Mr Scott, Chief Executive Officer, Council of Mayors South East Queensland

CHAIR: I now welcome our friend, Mr Scott Smith, the CEO of the Council of Mayors South East Queensland. I say 'our friend' because I have known Scott for quite a while in my role in local government. Welcome, Scott. We look forward to your opening address and then the committee will have questions for you.

Mr Smith: Thank you, Chair. As you would be aware, the council of mayors is owned by the 11 councils of South-East Queensland. We are the fastest growing region in the country. We represent 75 per cent of the state. We are obviously proud to have initiated and championed and helped secure the games for Brisbane and South-East Queensland and Queensland. You would be aware that we did that to ensure that we got the catalytic infrastructure and legacy outcomes that this region needs for the growth that is coming.

Since securing the games we have been a key games delivery partner and we have maintained an important role in supporting the government and the governance to make sure that our council areas have been well represented and directly engaged in the governance of the work to date. This includes some of our co-host cities, the host city, Brisbane, but also Moreton Bay, Redlands, Ipswich, Toowoomba and Logan and all the other SEQ councils that funded that work and seek to benefit from outcomes of the games. We put a submission in to the bill. We support the objective of the bill and of streamlining the governance arrangements of the organising committee and the board. We acknowledge and welcome the amendments to the legislation aimed at helping to ensure we deliver a lasting legacy before the games that benefits generations to come, which is obviously one of the key objectives of why we pursued this. However, we recognise that it should not be done at the expense of fair and equitable representation for CoMSEQ and our member councils in that games governance. Considering the critical role that local government plays and SEQ will play in the successful execution of Brisbane 2032, including through its leading role in games city operations, removing the Council of Mayors SEQ and our councils from governance at a leadership, executive and operational level is a significant risk to the overall coordination, effectiveness and success of the games governance.

To support that engagement, we continue to seek that, at minimum, Council of Mayors SEQ remains appointed as an observer across all games governance groups, not to complicate or make anything more difficult, but to make sure that there is adequate representation for our regions. We recognise that we do not have autonomous decision-making as a local government, but neither do any of the local governments given they have to take most decisions back to their council for a decision. We believe that we can adequately represent and continue to be a positive partner in the delivery of the games.

CHAIR: I think it is important to stress the work that you did originally with former lord mayor Graham Quirk going around and meeting with all of the councils. I was part of the Lockyer council then looking at making sure that the games started off. Well done on that.

Ms BUSH: Thank you for coming in and for all the work you have done in your role. It is well recognised. Your submission makes clear that the Council of Mayors SEQ was not consulted before this bill was introduced. Do you believe that you should have been, given the role that South-East Queensland councils have played in securing and preparing for the games?

Mr Smith: I appreciate the role that government plays in forming policy and we are obviously grateful that we got the opportunity to put a submission in and present today so I am happy that that is enough consultation for us to lead into the process. I understand the need to get on with things and get things moving. We have obviously been championing this for a long time and we are keen to see things move. I am quite happy that we have the opportunity so I am happy with that consultation, Deputy Chair.

Ms BUSH: Was it surprising to see that you did not have that prescribed role in the draft bill or in the bill introduced?

Mr Smith: Not really, to be honest, given the outcomes of the 100-day review. We were consulted heavily through that, we participated heavily in the 100-day review. We were aware of the concerns from a lot of parties so it was not a surprise at all. We were ready prepared with our submission.

Mr KEMPTON: Scott, given that 1,200 days have elapsed, do you see this bill as an appropriate means to streamline the government process leading into Brisbane 2032?

Mr Smith: As I said before, we obviously have championed this cause from 2014 when we started the journey and we are very mindful of the time that has lapsed and the need for us to get on with the work so we were happy to see the Crisafulli government's plan to deliver the games to settle

the discussions around venues and other infrastructure. I recognise the need to get on with it, the time that we need to do that and the need to streamline processes. I am supportive of the need to do that so that we get on and deliver the legacies that this region needs and make sure that we meet our objectives of the games.

Mr WHITING: One of the things this bill introduces is a new level of governance structure. I am talking specifically about the GLG, the Games Leadership Group, which the Deputy Premier described as the most senior decision-making group overseeing this. What risks do you see if local governments are excluded from games governance structures, particularly when it comes to delivery on the ground and coordination?

Mr Smith: I acknowledge that that group existed before but was just in a different format. We did have a representative on that who was nominated by our board. At the time, it was Mayor Flannery from Moreton Bay. As our submission says, we are concerned about not being involved. Obviously, local government is represented in that group through the Lord Mayor. The Lord Mayor obviously wears two hats as the Lord Mayor of Brisbane and the chair of the Council of Mayors SEQ, so it is not as though we do not have it. I guess what was afforded by having a Council of Mayors SEQ member on there was that the Lord Mayor was the Lord Mayor of Brisbane and represented the interests of his ratepayers and our representative represented the rest of the region. Obviously, we now have to manage that in a different way with the Lord Mayor and make sure there is collaboration behind it. Our submission pushed for making sure we had some level of representation on that board as we did before the changes.

CHAIR: I go to the member for Mulgrave, a former mayor himself.

Mr JAMES: Following on from the previous questions, in your submission you note your concerns about the streamlined corporation governance arrangements. Considering both the state and federal government nominations are being reduced from four to one and there will still be three nominations from the Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast councils, do you agree that those three nominations from the largest SEQ councils maintain critical local government representation amongst the streamlined board?

Mr Smith: We are talking about the organising committee now. Brisbane and the Gold Coast were represented and they are the largest host and co-host cities. Obviously Brisbane is the host city. It was a matter of another local government representation which, before these changes, was the Lord Mayor's nomination and he chose to go to the Council of Mayors SEQ to get that nomination. That was Mayor Harding from Ipswich and prior to that it was other mayors.

I recognise the importance of the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane. Clearly, Brisbane is the host city. I am happy that we have three local governments represented as the key. The other approach allowed for the other councils to be represented. As per my previous comment about the leadership group, it now rests on Mayor Natoli and the Lord Mayor to make sure that the other councils are adequately represented. I am mindful that that is a possibility and capable; they just have to wear two hats. If that is how we end up then that is how we end up. Obviously, our preference was to stick with what we had before but I recognise the need to improve that.

Ms BUSH: Scott, getting on with the job, obviously, is critical and that is something we all share. So too is preserving environmental and cultural assets to our communities so that Queenslanders do not lose those assets and we continue to promote ourselves as vibrant cities and a vibrant state. What amendments would your members like to see to the current process to create a more transparent planning framework and to pick up some of the concerns around insufficient guidance for cultural plans and environmental considerations that, quite frankly, would be a shame to lose from Queensland?

Mr Smith: Clearly our submission did not address any of that. It was not something that our members raised for us directly so we have no position on that. I cannot really comment on any of that.

CHAIR: Scott, you recognise that the bill does contain, in the explanatory notes, the requirement to have and meet EPBC Act approvals and also to develop with stakeholders the cultural heritage management plans. A couple of the issues that the deputy chair has raised are included in that. It is not as if we are abrogating that responsibility.

Ms BUSH: I am sorry, Chair: is there a question coming or is that just a statement? I can respond to that, if you like. We heard in the last hearing that they are different legislative formats doing different legislative things so I do not know why we are talking about the EPBC Act again.

CHAIR: Thanks, Deputy Chair. It is my question and I am giving a preamble for Mr Smith so he understands the context of it. Scott, do you agree that, throughout the designing and planning of the venues and the development of this legislation, the government will be required to meet those approvals?

Mr Smith: As I have answered the deputy chair, we did not put any of that in our submission so I will not have any real value to add to that comment. I do not disagree that obviously there are processes in place that people have to follow to make sure that consultation is done, but it was not part of our submission.

CHAIR: What benefits do you see in having more streamlined governance arrangements for the 2032 Olympics?

Mr Smith: As I said before, I think time is of the essence. We need to get on with the job. We have had a lot of work done, a lot of conversations happen, a lot of reviews done on plans. I think we are all happy and, generally speaking, our members are happy that we have a plan. Let's get on with it. I think whatever we can do to get on with it and meet those targets and, importantly, get the legacy we need before and after the games, mindful that none of these venues are just for 2032; they are all for pre and post legacy outcomes that we need for a growing community. From our point of view, the sooner we can get these delivered the better.

Ms BUSH: Scott, are SEQ local governments expecting to receive infrastructure charges from games venues and associated infrastructure? If not, how do they propose to fund the supporting trunk infrastructure required to service these developments?

Mr Smith: I could not comment because I am not familiar with that part of the process. Obviously, some venues are owned by local government and some are owned by the state. I could not really add any value to that.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Smith. There are no further questions. We appreciate your submission and your appearance before the committee today. Thank you for answering our questions.

Mr Smith: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the opportunity.

CHAIR: That concludes this hearing. Thank you to everyone who participated today. No questions were taken on notice. Thank you to our Hansard reporters and broadcast staff. Thank you to the secretariat. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. I declare the public hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 11.22 am.