



Speech by

HOWARD HOBBS

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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INTEGRATED PLANNING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (2.30 p.m.): The Integrated Planning Act was enacted last year and changed the way planning and development is administered in Queensland. The coalition recognises that the legislation is a living document and welcomes the changes put forward in this Bill. Therefore, it will be supporting this legislation.

Former Minister McCauley advised the House that a number of consequential amendments to the present Act and regulations may be required. In his second-reading speech, the Minister said that these amendments were machinery in nature to resolve teething problems. These issues have been brought to the Government's attention through various stakeholders, workshops and the Integrated Planning Act Implementation Group. It is expected that IDAS, the Integrated Development Assessment Scheme, will collapse about 60 separate approval processes into a single system.

I am pleased to see that, in his second-reading speech, the Minister stated that he would monitor the operations closely and make adjustments and refinements as necessary. They will occur simply because there are variations throughout the State—various communities and cities. We are talking about people from Cape York to Birdsville to the Gold Coast.

The extensive training program for council staff has been quite successful. It has allowed a lot of those people, particularly those who work at the cutting edge of local government where the planning issues are particularly relevant, to know how the new Act works and how they should in fact react to concerns expressed by the public and ratepayers. The Act is huge legislation and hundreds of council officers are using it as a bible. I believe that it was a great achievement for Queensland to get the legislation in place and operating without having as many problems as could be expected.

Members will recall that it was the coalition Government that introduced the IPA last year. At that time, Minister McCauley gave credit to the member for Chatsworth for the work that he had undertaken towards creating a single development approval system during the term of the Goss Government. However, the fact remained that after six years of talking and planning and draft papers there was still no sign of legislation. The Borbidge Government recognised the urgent need for a complete overhaul of the planning approval processes. It worked with stakeholders to ensure that the new planning legislation was formulated only after interest groups had been consulted, and it was important that a draft Bill was able to sit on the table to allow for broader public input. We had an enormous consultation process. An IPA task force was established, which included representatives from local government, development and planning sectors, the environmental lobby and rural groups. Although I acknowledge the difficulties involved in formulating legislation, I have to say that the Borbidge Government delivered in less than 18 months what could not be delivered in the previous six years.

We can be thankful that that was the case, particularly as the present Minister well knows that he would have great difficulty getting the integrated development approvals system that we have now through the caucus. I think that he would have had a great deal of difficulty, particularly in relation to environmental matters. I take this opportunity to remind the Minister of the importance of keeping the planning process simple and, in relation to future amendments to the IPA, to urge him not to let minority interests clog up and delay a good system.

The most important thing is the timetable for introducing the other subsequent amendments. I understand that part of the original plan was to make sure that those subsequent amendments were passed after the main Act was put into place. In relation to a lot of those amendments, the Minister will have to work hard at keeping some of his colleagues under control. I wish him all the best with that. I am certainly happy to give him all my support to ensure that those subsequent amendments are introduced so that the whole Act comes together as one comprehensive piece of legislation.

I accept that the changes proposed in this Bill are essentially machinery in nature and fall into two categories. The amendments clarify the intent of the legislation and streamline some of the administration procedures. In summary, the Bill proposes amendments to Chapter 3 of the IPA to improve the efficiency of IDAS, particularly for minor applications, and to modify or remove some provisions that assessment managers are finding difficult or costly to administer and to Chapter 6 of the IPA, Savings and Transitionals, to clarify its application in areas such as the scope of approvals and the ability to enforce decisions made under the former Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act.

The Bill also proposes amendments to the Environmental Protection Act to clarify the operation of IDAS for environmentally relevant activities. It amends the Local Government Act to allow local governments greater flexibility in making and amending development-related local laws, particularly as a result of the public interest testing. The Bill also makes amendments to the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 to clarify the application of building control in port areas, the Land Title Act 1994 to clarify that certain leases resulting from a development approval under IDAS must be approved by local governments before they are registered, and the Building Act 1975 as a consequence of proposed amendments to the IPA allowing companies and local governments to be accredited as private building certifiers rather than restricting accreditation to individuals only.

I am not going to go into great detail on the amendments because, basically, they are minor and machinery in type. However, I want to thank local authorities for their cooperation in the implementation.

Mr Mackenroth: If you are going to be the local government spokesman, don't use that word "authorities"—local government.

Mr HOBBS: All right, local government. I thank them for their cooperation in the implementation of the IPA. Local government also needs to consider these new processes with a view to looking at every opportunity to streamline the process—the planning process, the administration process, the quick turnaround of applications so that ratepayers get absolute value for dollar efficiently and quickly. We do not need a system that gets bogged down in legal argument or fixed time frames. If an application can be approved sooner than the maximum period set in legislation and regulation, that is, when all the checks have been completed, then it should be done. I support the legislation.
