



Speech by

**Mr D. BRISKEY**

**MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND**

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Hansard 18 October 2000

### **MORETON BAY ISLANDS**

**Mr BRISKEY** (Cleveland—ALP) (6.40 p.m.): I rise in support of the Government's amendment to the motion. The southern Moreton Bay islands of Russell, Macleay, Lamb and Karragarra are located in one of the most beautiful parts of Queensland.

This whole issue is clearly a vexed one with a long and very complex past. Many of the up to 5,000 problem blocks were sold off the plan to unsuspecting purchasers throughout Australia and overseas who were not aware of the topographic or other physical constraints applying to their purchased lots. The purchases in these cases were speculative. For many there was of course a not uncommon expectation that appropriate infrastructure would be provided. After all, the subdivision of the islands was approved.

The fact is that this is an extremely sorry chapter in Queensland's history. The question that has often been asked is: where was the protection of these people's rights at the time? How was it possible that this could have happened? Who was protecting the interests of those who were spending their hard-earned dollars on land that could never be built on? Were not the laws of the land capable of protecting the rights of these innocent citizens? Where was the Government of the day when these innocent citizens were being duded? Did anyone care? Clearly not!

The sad fact is that the Government of the day was a co-perpetrator of this gross deed. It was those opposite in the National/Liberal coalition who stood by while innocent taxpayers were duded. People in a democracy are entitled to expect the protection of Government in these matters. A clear measure of good government and an undoubted responsibility of a Government is that Government's ability to protect people's basic rights. This was not a measure that was familiar to the Bjelke-Petersen Government and we should never forget that. The friends of the wealthy, the top end of town and those who could not make it on their own accepted the patronage of the mates of those opposite.

Many people who purchased blocks of land on the southern Moreton Bay islands without inspection were sold a dud. The southern Moreton Bay islands, with a maximum capacity of just over 22,000 residents if ecological sustainability and infrastructure needs are taken into account, are not capable of supporting the 30,000 to 40,000 residents who could stem from the maximum development of the lots sold. Where to for the unfortunate landowners?

The Bjelke-Petersen Government failed a test of responsible Government when it came to the islands of the southern Moreton Bay. The subsequent Governments did not. Although it was never going to be possible to entirely unscramble the egg in relation to this matter, the Goss, Borbidge and Beattie Governments have done all possible to rectify the wrongs.

The southern Moreton Bay islands are located in a truly beautiful part of the world. Although these islands are not located within the boundaries of my electorate—as the member for Redlands when first elected in 1989 they were—the wrongs that we are debating tonight were frequently raised with me. It is immensely important that we do the right thing, that we do all we can to retain those elements of the islands that make them truly special. Whilst we need to have regard to the rights of those wronged in the past, we need also to focus on the future of these

precious assets. The clear challenge for the Government has always been to arrive at a solution that is the fairest possible to all involved.

In May 1973 the southern Moreton Bay islands, as we have heard, were included in the Redland Shire. The first town planning scheme for the bay islands was prepared in 1976. In 1995 the Government agreed to fund a major study to determine the ecologically sustainable population for the islands and determine appropriate measures for managing development impacts. The study, a joint study between the Honourable Minister's department, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Redland Shire Council, led to the draft Southern Moreton Bay Islands Land Use and Development Strategy. The study involved extensive consultation with a range of Government agencies and a range of scientific, water quality, habitat, vegetation and transport experts.

In limiting development, the rights of land owners need to be carefully considered—and they have been. Existing development entitlements are to be preserved. When an application comes to council for approval, the council will need to take into account the usual considerations relating to the suitability of the land for development: is the land too steep, capable of sustaining construction, able to be sufficiently drained and so on.

As the draft study was undertaken in concert with the local community, the Government and the council in an open and consultative way, the outcomes I believe are fair and take into account the reality of the current situation.

As to the original motion, this matter has been investigated to death. Even the CJC has had a go, conducting an investigation into landowner complaints and allegations of corruption and dropping land values as a result of the study. The CJC advised in March of this year that there was no evidence of inappropriate activity. We need to move on.

Time expired.

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