



Speech by

**JULIE ATTWOOD**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY**

---

Hansard 18 October 2000

#### **MORETON BAY ISLANDS**

**Mrs ATTWOOD** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (6.29 p.m.): Soon after I became elected as the member for Mount Ommaney, Brian Fuller, a resident of my electorate, visited me about the issue of the Moreton Bay islands. Since then he has visited me on a regular basis to keep me up to date on what is happening in relation to the islands. I have made a number of representations to the Minister for Local Government on behalf of affected residents. A number of other people living in my area have also called to see me about properties that they own on the island.

The main issue of concern seems to be the valuation of their properties. Originally, the owners purchased their properties as investment properties in the hope that one day they could build and retire there. It was their little nest egg. Some people spent their entire life savings on the properties thinking at the time that the value of the property could only increase over time. What has happened is that over time the properties have been devalued for various reasons. Some, I have been told, have been given the reason that their property is subject to flooding. This is something that they were not aware of when they purchased their properties. It seems that that came to light only when the Borbidge Government's Moreton Bay islands study was released by the Beattie Government in early 1999. Some properties have been devalued to less than their yearly rates bill. As a result, a lot of people have sold their properties.

There are approximately 5,000 people from places all over the world who have purchased land on the island. In many cases, the purchases were speculative in the anticipation that infrastructure—roads, reticulated water and sewerage, stormwater drainage and a bridge connection to the mainland—would be provided. Who knows what these decent, hardworking citizens were told when they purchased their properties with their life savings? Now they find that they are out of pocket and are continuing to pay rates, the amount of which is higher than the value of their property. These people are extremely angry and feel that they have been ripped off.

I do not blame them for feeling that way. Through paying their rates, they are paying for infrastructure that does not exist. Brian Fuller, the president of the Moreton Bay Islands Action Group, has worked really hard on this issue. He has established great respect and a network of affected landowners across the world. He is extremely passionate and determined about the fact that ordinary battlers have been ripped off. One resident purchased a block in 1973 for \$1,395. In 1996, his land valuation dropped from \$3,400 and in 1997 was valued at \$500. His annual rates are \$478.10. That person invested his life savings and a lot of hope in that property, only to end up with less than nothing.

In the 1970s, the State Government of the time allowed the subdivision of the islands into 22,500 small blocks, of which approximately 16,800 were potentially able to be developed, without the provision of physical infrastructure such as sewerage, water and roads, or social infrastructure, such as schools, health facilities, adequate transport, or ease of access to employment. Up to 5,000 of those blocks were also subject to tidal inundation and flooding. That is the problem and how it all started. That was the point in time when land-holders were ripped off.

But it was not until the study was completed that people were made aware of this. The draft Southern Moreton Bay Islands Land Use and Development Strategy is the outcome of the joint study between the Department of Local Government, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Redland Shire Council. The study was to examine ways of addressing longstanding land development and servicing problems that arose as a result of inappropriate subdivision approvals in the 1970s.

The damage done in the 1970s has caused landowners a lot of hardship. This Government agrees that landowners' concerns in relation to the draft strategy should be considered and has modified the implementation strategy. This includes the preparation, in consultation with landowners, of a statutory planning instrument and associated infrastructure charges by the Redland Shire Council in accordance with the requirements of the Integrated Planning Act 1997. That means providing advice and assistance to land-holders, increasing Government subsidy contributions for infrastructure and special arrangements for existing land-holders at the very least. The State will work with the council during the preparation of the statutory planning instrument to help the council develop an integrated approach to rating and charging regimes that supports the final form of development and service expected on the islands.

While I admire the tenacity of the Moreton Bay Islands Action Group and sympathise with their cause, I believe that the State is doing what it can to ensure that land-holders' concerns are taken into consideration. Considering the lack of services on the island, the rating system certainly needs to be reviewed. However, I feel that another inquiry into the matter would not resolve properly the issues of land-holders, considering that the CJC has already looked into the matter in detail. That would be costly and not achieve results for landowners. It would be more appropriate for the Redland Shire Council, with the help of the State, to look at individual land-holders' circumstances in relation to their properties in order to establish a fair and equitable approach in this regard. That would include the examination of valuations on properties in relation to specific areas.

I urge the Redland Shire Council to enter into genuine communication with the State Government and land-holders over this very important matter. I support the Government's amendment to this motion.

Time expired.

---