



Speech by

JOHN ENGLISH

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

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COASTAL PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (11.32 a.m.): I would like to say a few words in support of the Coastal Protection and Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I am particularly pleased that this bill continues the move towards coordination and cooperation in government decision making. Having looked at the history of coastal legislation and management in Queensland, I have to say that, over the years, we have approached this issue in a quite fragmented way. Because of that, we have made decisions that address individual and local issues when we really needed to look at the wider impacts of these decisions. That approach has certainly not been in the best interests of the coastal environment and not in the best interests of the people that this environment supports.

In the 1950s, we had the Harbours Act to deal mainly with navigation related issues. Then in 1958 the Canals Act was enacted to deal with the increasing number of residential canal estates on the Gold Coast. However, that act dealt more with the construction and maintenance aspect than the environmental aspect. A decade later, the Beach Protection Act 1968 was enacted to deal with severe beach erosion problems and what could be done to protect property in erosion-prone areas. I know that one of the islands in my electorate, Coochiemudlo Island, has been declared an erosion-prone area.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Queensland experienced dramatic growth in regional centres. State-wide over that 20-year period the average annual population growth was 2.5 per cent. From 1981 to 1989, the outer suburbs of Brisbane and the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast regional areas grew at more than six per cent—more than twice the state average—

Mr Cummins: And growing.

Mr ENGLISH: And growing. Queensland's growing population led to a growing demand for residential development in coastal areas. In turn, that led to what is termed ribbon development—the building of residences and facilities along the coastline to provide maximum waterfrontage development. It also led to an increased development of the residential canal estates, particularly in south-east Queensland.

The rapid rate of urban growth on the coast during the 1970s and the 1980s had various adverse impacts on the region. Water quality and coastal waterways and marine waters deteriorated as a result of stormwater run-off and effluent disposal. Native plant and native animal habitats were destroyed or displaced, particularly wetlands, as well as riparian and marine ecosystems. I know that many recreational fishermen in my electorate continually complain that this development has impacted on their fish catches. Some of the older fishermen in my electorate say that, 20 years ago, they would go out for a couple of hours and could catch a feed quite easily. Now it is more the norm for them to go out fishing overnight and catch nothing than it is to catch a decent feed of fish.

In north Queensland alone, between 1951 and 1992, 47 per cent of freshwater wetlands were lost. The loss of wetland areas added to local water quality problems as well as displacing valuable habitat for the state's fisheries resources. As we moved into the 1990s, three main issues prompted a move towards a more integrated coastal management approach for Queensland. These were the growing impacts from urban development on the coast and adjacent marine systems, the need to better coordinate the many laws enforced in the coastal area and the many agencies which administer them, and the Australia-wide coastal zone inquiry.

In the early 1990s, the Queensland government recognised that the coastal zone was under increasing pressure and that it needed to review and adopt a more comprehensive management

approach. As part of this review, in 1991 the state government released its Coastal Protection Strategy green paper. In doing that, the government recognised the vital role that the coastal zone played in the economy and lifestyle of Queensland, particularly in the electorate of Redlands.

In the mid-1990s, Queensland had a number of laws directly relevant to the management of the coastal zone. In addition to the older statutes, such as the Harbours Act 1955, the Canals Act 1958 and the Beach Protection Act 1968, specific legislation had been prepared for the management of the environment, which included air quality, noise and water; fisheries and their habitats; state land; inland waters; nature conservation and protected areas; marine pollution; marine parks; state forests; mining; and cultural heritage. Some of those acts included ecologically sustainable development as a core principle. However, they operated independently in the coastal zone administered by up to seven different agencies at any given time over different tenures, including state land and freehold land.

As a result of the Coastal Protection Strategy released in 1991, the Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995 was subsequently enacted. With the introduction of the bill that we are debating today, we are continuing the reforms that are needed to achieve integrated coastal management. With the consolidation of four acts into one, we are working towards a coordinated approach to coastal management. The lead agency, the Environmental Protection Agency, will work with other government agencies that have coastal management responsibilities.

The changes proposed by this bill, the State Coastal Management Plan and research that is currently being carried out on various coastal management issues are helping to promote an awareness and level of understanding in the community of the need for integrated coastal zone management. This understanding and awareness is growing, but it needs to continue if we are going to find solutions for balancing the demands of a growing population that want a coastal lifestyle against the pressures that that lifestyle creates for coastal resources. Ultimately, the success of coastal management strategies will depend on those of us who are in government working with industry and community groups to ensure that our activities and settlements are sustainable. I am pleased to see that happening through initiatives such as the State Coastal Management Plan.

My electorate of Redlands has a unique environment. It has a very, very large coastline that fronts Moreton Bay. Part of my electorate adjoins the Logan River, and five islands are situated in the southern Moreton Bay area—the lovely Coochiemudlo Island, Karragarra Island, Lamb Island, Russell Island and Macleay Island.

The issues included in this bill will impact directly on my constituents. Many people have chosen to live in the lovely Redlands area because of its bayside nature. Many people have moved there for the coastal resort-type living it offers. The issues we need to manage are issues that are currently being discussed by the Redland Shire Council; that is, sewerage and waste management on the bay islands. The bay islands cannot support unfettered development if the infrastructure is not there. Without that infrastructure there will be adverse effects on the land environment and subsequently on the marine environment, particularly the sensitive marine park that is Moreton Bay. This bill acknowledges that working in a collective and coordinated way gives us the flexibility to account for emerging issues such as climate change trends and gives us the opportunities we need to account for those issues in the most appropriate ways. I commend the bill to the House.
