



Speech by

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Hansard 13 September 2001

VALUERS REGISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (6.45 p.m.): In rising to speak to this bill, I would have to say that the only concerns that I have had expressed to me from constituents have been about the valuers who work with the department and the yearly valuation they have to deal with. That is not a sleight on those people, because the valuers who actually work there—Tom Coe and his cohorts—are wonderful people. But I have said to them on more than one occasion that discussing with them their valuation methodology on an annual basis is like having a lobotomy with your eyes open.

Mr Robertson: In fact that is more pleasurable.

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM: It possibly is. At least you know the end result. Actually, you know the end result when you are having discussions with them, too; you are going to make absolutely no headway at all.

Perhaps our area has been fortunate in that it has been serviced in the main by local people. There are a couple of valuers who come down from Rockhampton who regularly value rural properties in particular, namely John Sheehan and, for urban properties, Michael Sheehan. I have not heard complaints about the local valuation process. I would, however, say that in my region in particular the actual valuation procedure and the changes in valuations according to either sales or depressed land values in drought periods for rural properties has had a significant effect. I have spoken about this before.

The other thing that depresses land valuations is the development of industrial sites in close proximity to rural properties. One landowner in particular had such a drop in the collateral value of their land that the bank actually put the squeeze on them to the point where they have been required to sell one of the properties. The great constraint that they have—and I have spoken about this before in the House—is that once a perceived blight is attached to a property because of industrial development, whether the damage to the property is real or implied, because of the outputs of the industry, be they atmospheric or noise, the reduction in the collateral value is a very real impost on those landowners as far as future borrowings are concerned or borrowings to be able to productively farm their properties. I am not sure to what extent—and I would be interested to what extent—the obligations in the Valuers Registration Amendment Bill will be placed on the valuers for the department. I would have to say that, as I have said, the complaints that I receive are in the line of a lack of logic with the valuations that are done for rating purposes.

It is purported to be on the basis of sales. We went from seven-yearly valuations to annual valuations. That was intended to reduce the peaks and troughs of valuation increases or decreases. The reality is that landowners now face those peaks or troughs on an annual basis instead of seven-yearly. I am not sure what accountability there is. My experience is that there is little accountability of the valuation system within the department other than for property owners to go to the Land Court.

I reiterate that valuers are nice people. They are the salt of the earth. They are the nicest blokes. They will smile at you and frustrate you at the same time. A property will be revalued and the valuation will increase on the basis of sales. This is actually a debate that I have with them. I will say to them that there have been no sales in our area. They will say, 'But when there are no sales we import sales of like properties in proximity to the properties that you own.' It is a cyclical debate that you cannot win.

I would like to reinforce to the minister that the complaints that I have received revolve around the logic—or lack of logic—that appears to be used by departmental valuers. Perhaps they need to get out into the commercial valuation environment to ensure that their valuation skills are not just desktop-based and focused on internal departmental processes but are also based on sound commercial valuation processes.

Other than that, I have not received complaints about this bill. I am sure that many valuers will appreciate the fact that the mandatory period for prerequisite experience has been reduced. Previously they were required to have experience for a period of five years. That has been reduced to three years. Some flexibility has been included in relation to the payment of membership fees. They now have the option of paying fees in advance for up to five years. It is up to them how long they want to pay for. As I said, on the basis that I have not received complaints from valuers about the bill—and certainly I have not received complaints from constituents about our local valuers other than the departmental valuers—I thank the minister for the legislation.
