



Speech by

**Mr M. HORAN**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH**

---

Hansard 20 June 2001

**STATE DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.41 p.m.): I rise to join debate on the State Development and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and to raise a couple of matters in relation to it. It was interesting to hear the previous speaker in the debate talk about jobs. I wish he would swallow his pride and admit that Queensland has the worst unemployment statistics in Australia—nine per cent. It is getting further and further below the Australian average as every month goes by. I really do feel sorry for those young people in Queensland who are looking for work and who are not able to find it because of the way the government continues to apply the same old tired policies that do not work and do not bring about any innovation, real economic growth, exports and jobs.

Whilst talking about jobs potential in relation to the broad-ranging issues of a state development bill, I refer to the recycled water project. I have spoken about this issue in this parliament for the past three or four years. The minister has some serious interest in that project and has been fully briefed and understands it. If there is one project that can solve many different and pressing issues in this state, it is the recycled water project.

**Mr Barton:** As I said this morning, we need some money off your mates.

**Mr HORAN:** We need some money from this government, too. If the government is going to keep saying that projects like these are good but it is not prepared to put its hand in its own pocket, they will never progress. I have said from the outset that this has to be a real partnership between the state government, the federal government and private enterprise.

**Mr Barton:** We have put more money into it than the federal government has to date.

**Mr HORAN:** The only money the government has put into it at the moment is in relation to the feasibility stage. Money was given to the project when it started by the coalition when it was in government and the Labor Party put more money into it as the feasibility of the project progressed. The Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, has given \$500,000—

**Mr Barton:** We've got over \$600,000 in it.

**Mr HORAN:** The minister says that it has \$600,000 in it, and the federal government has just put in \$500,000.

**Mr Barton:** I know, but we have put in more than them, so acknowledge that.

**Mr HORAN:** I will acknowledge that; the government has put in \$100,000 more. The point I make is that when these feasibility studies come to finality it is important for everybody to be honest about wanting to make a significant contribution. The state government should say that it is prepared to make a significant contribution, provided that the federal government makes a significant contribution. There are then private enterprise opportunities and partnerships. Those opportunities and partnerships include the irrigators themselves, because many of them are interested in putting forward certain amounts of capital in addition to what they would pay per megalitre for water.

We will support the government in asking the federal government for substantial funds towards this project, but it is also important for the state government to indicate that it is prepared to make a

substantial contribution to this project as well. Before the last election, the coalition promised to put in a third of the amount—some \$200 million. That is the sort of substantial contribution needed for a project like this if the government is serious about wanting the project to go ahead. Generally speaking, water projects are the province of the state, because the state government builds the dams and so forth. However, this project is different because it also solves major environmental problems at both ends. It solves the problem of nutrients being discharged into Moreton Bay and it provides more water supplies to the Condamine area so that irrigators do not have to rely on river water but can rely on overland flow, bore water and recycled water.

I have watched this project develop from the start. I have a lot of confidence in the people behind it in both the Lockyer Valley and the Darling Downs. They are people of great integrity, people who have had to borrow substantial amounts of money to put together very big enterprises and take great risks. With good professional agricultural skills, they have been available to make this project go ahead. The government has total support from us in whatever it wants to do with this project, but I stress that what is needed is straightforward negotiation without too much politics. There needs to be a commitment on both sides—

**Mr Barton:** I would suggest that you stop your ex-coalition partners and your own people from playing politics with it, because that is what is happening with it right now. Playing politics with it is going to put it at more risk than any other factor, and you should know that.

**Mr HORAN:** I fully agree. What I am saying is that we need to have a statement from the minister. He has said that he supports the project, but what is needed is for the government to say—

**Mr Barton:** I am sick of saying it.

**Mr HORAN:** As well as the federal government putting in a substantial contribution, the state needs to be prepared to do the same sort of thing. Without a partnership between the state and federal government as well as private companies, it is not going to go ahead.

The other issue I want to raise relating to the bill is that part of the minister's second reading speech about works undertaken by the Coordinator-General. If members carefully read the minister's speech, they will see it describes what this bill will do. It states—

When the Coordinator-General obtains approval to undertake particular works under the SDPWO Act, the amendments will allow him or her to empower another entity to do the works. Specifically, it is proposed that the Coordinator-General be able to delegate this power to the chief executive of government department as well as local body ...

I presume by that the minister means a local council. Is that right?

**Mr Barton:** I will respond.

**Mr HORAN:** That is something I ask the minister to address in his summing-up. The second reading speech goes on—

... as well as local body, as currently provided for in the act.

It then states—

Such powers would only be able to take effect with the prior approval of the Governor in Council. Upon completion of the works, the proposed amendments will enable the Coordinator-General to transfer the works to another entity established under an act. These provisions will enable the construction of authorised works, such as those for the Lang Park Stadium, to be undertaken in a coordinated manner.

This is almost an open cheque. This basically says that the Coordinator-General can delegate another department to undertake it. I can understand that that might be to do with coordination. When it comes to transferring the work to another entity, what does that actually mean? Taking Lang Park as an example, does that mean that the government could build Lang Park and then pass it on to another entity, which could be the Lang Park Trust or an established corporation, or the Brisbane City Council or a private developer or construction firm? It just says 'an entity'. It is totally open. The dimension of this project is \$300 million plus the associated works. Whenever there have been major projects such as South Bank where there is some transfer or change of that project to an organisation, a major bill comes to the parliament.

I can remember bills relating to the casino in Townsville—I think it was the Breakwater Island Trust—South Bank and other things coming before the parliament. That is the way we normally deal with those sorts of transferences in this parliament. A special bill which sets everything out in great detail is introduced. The reasons for the transfer are enumerated and there is a chance for members from both sides of the House to speak about the issues. The process is open and accountable and ensures that these matters are dealt with in a singular and a special way. In this case it looks as though in the middle of this major amending bill is a provision which ensures virtually an open book to transfer the works to another entity.

The Brisbane City Council objected so strongly to the construction of Lang Park, yet in recent times that objection seems to have disappeared. One has to wonder what has happened behind the scenes. Has some deal been done whereby Lang Park is perhaps transferred to the Brisbane City Council while the council, to overcome the issue of the Broncos' contract, transfers ANZ Stadium to the state government for the government to turn ANZ into a housing estate or provide some form of cash arrangement? One really has to wonder what is going on behind the scenes with this whole project. In the midst of all the queries about how Lang Park is to be funded—

**Mr Barton:** You are the one who says I should not be building things, that I should be giving them back to other departments.

**Mr HORAN:** I am just trying to get to the point about Lang Park, which is stuck in the middle of all these amendments. It just amazes me that legislative provisions could be so open as to enable the transfer of works to another entity. The other entity is not described in any way.

The Minister for State Development is the one who will sit like Solomon in judgment on these appeals. I would love to have some money on the decision he will come to in relation to the appeals of the local people and the Anglican Church. The minister is bound by cabinet solidarity—cabinet has made the decision; he is bound by that decision that has been made—yet he will be sitting in judgment on the appeals. Do people think they will get justice? The minister has a great deal of interest in this bill. The decision on Lang Park has been made. As the Minister for State Development he will be heavily involved in that project. Yet he is the one to sit in judgment and make a decision on the appeals of people around Lang Park who wanted to have their day in court on this controversial project.

The real query we have is: who is Lang Park going to be transferred to? Is it the Lang Park Trust? Is it a private company? Is it the Brisbane City Council? What sort of deal has been done? Why does the minister actually want to transfer the works to another entity? Why does he want to have that particular power? That is our real concern. We want to see some real accountability in this process. We are a bit sick of the arrogance that is being displayed and the open cheque arrangements that are indicated by this particular part of the bill. We would like an explanation of that.

---