



Speech by

CHRIS CUMMINS

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard 3 December 2002

PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (10.42 p.m.): The Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2002 introduces new plumbing and drainage legislation that will make changes to the private building certification system. As we should realise, the national competition policy was one of the main initiators that saw private certifiers into this area. While some people will criticise it, I see the benefits that should see ratepayers right across the state no longer subsidising certifiers who were previously employed by councils. In this way ratepayers were cross-subsidising developments.

The bill repeals the outdated Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949 and replaces it with a modern legislative framework for plumbing and drainage. In doing so, the bill provides for increased accountability for the actions of local government and better protection of the rights of individuals through more transparent decision making and improved appeal processes. The bill amends the Building Act 1975 and the Integrated Planning Act 1997 to improve the performance of the building certificate system. The changes will increase minimum competency standards for private certifiers.

I was a member of the Caloundra City Council when we allowed the council's building inspectors to look at a commercial enterprise which was called Country and Coastal Certifiers. There were some very capable and willing workers involved. I believe they are still very competitive in the industry. I am disappointed to hear that residents are complaining and are ringing the council only to be told that the certifiers sign off on buildings in areas such as Kings Beach which are facing redevelopment. The certifiers are working outside what was approved by council. If something is zoned to go to six storeys, or some other height, I find it hard to believe that it should be going over. I will be following this through. I hope it is not the case of the council trying to duckshove or put the blame onto someone else.

Earlier today we heard talk from other members with regard to the pros and cons of rainwater tanks and dual reticulation or the re-use of waste water. I fully support dual reticulation. I suggest to conservatives opposite that if the full sale of Telstra goes ahead they should be rattling the can with their federal colleagues to see that Queensland receives some money. We are a very arid state in one of the most arid nations in the world. In 20 to 50 years time I believe that rainwater tanks and dual reticulation will be quite common. If we look into the future and work our way back, when will we introduce dual reticulation? Everyone should remember that years ago there was no such thing as sewerage. It took some brave people, including the former mayor of Brisbane, to face up to this situation. It is about time that the federal government looked at funding for dual reticulation, and instead of pumping water into Moreton Bay we can put it on the grass and other areas.

Amendments to the Building Act and the Integrated Planning Act will improve the performance of the building certification system. While private certification has provided the public with faster building approvals, it has also brought with it a number of other problems that need to be resolved. Many of these have been raised already. The bill will ensure that the private building certification system operates to the highest possible standards and that public interests are properly protected. This is a must for Queensland residents.

I want to mention one other matter. The bill clarifies responsibilities where work takes place on land not under local government control. This is where the land is under control of another entity such as a port authority or is not part of any local government area. This applies to developments extending below the high water mark, such as piers or wharves. This is very relevant to the Sunshine Coast and my electorate of Kawana. In these cases, the entity responsible for the land is also responsible for ensuring that plumbing and drainage work complies with the relevant technical standards. These entities can ask the local government to undertake the assessment and inspection of plumbing and draining work on its behalf. Local governments will continue to be responsible for approving and inspecting plumbing work. The compliance assessment process introduced under the bill will provide greater certainty and consistency in decision making for the community and the plumbing industry. This is a win. I commend the minister and her department, and I commend the bill to the House.