



Speech by

CHRIS CUMMINS

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard 30 April 2003

LAND LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (5.01 p.m.): I am proud to support this legislation as it will ensure protection not only of our privacy but also of Shelburne Bay. Shelburne Bay has been identified by independent scientists as an area of extraordinary environmental significance. In studies spanning 25 years the fundamental importance of protecting the environment and recognising native title rights in the area has been highlighted. Cape York Peninsula in its entirety is an area of unique significance. The joint state and Commonwealth government Cape York Peninsula Land Use Study recognised this and was implemented to ensure that any decisions about land use on the cape were appropriate. After wide public consultation, Shelburne Bay was identified as an initial priority area to receive government support to ensure that the area's natural values were protected. A major obstacle to the complete protection of Shelburne Bay was the continued existence of two mining leases which were originally granted in February 1975 and subsequently renewed for a further 14-year term in 1989. These leases have never been mined.

The outcry against sandmining in Shelburne Bay has come from many quarters. The Wilderness Society, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Australian Democrats, the Queensland Greens and of course Shelburne's traditional owners have all appealed to successive state governments to permanently protect the area by not renewing those mining leases. In recognition of those concerns and of the unique environmental and cultural significance of the area, our government proposes to ensure that the protection of the area will be permanent by legislating to guarantee that it will never be mined. Let us not listen to those who continue to talk about chasing green votes and whatever; let us recognise that this government is doing the right thing for future generations.

We as a proactive, positive government need to protect the privacy of householders being subjected to unsolicited junk mail passed off as personal letters. This legislation is also about preventing information sourced from the property database of the Department of Natural Resources and Mines being used for direct marketing purposes. Householders often receive personally addressed letters that turn out to be direct marketing material promoting real estate offers, mortgage broking and property valuation services and similar. I know that this angers many Sunshine Coast residents. Constituents believe this practice is an invasion of their privacy. That is why I am pleased to support these changes to the Valuation of Land Act to stop the practice.

The proposed changes before the House allow the Department of Natural Resources and Mines to prohibit the disclosure or limit the distribution of bulk valuation and sales data already supplied to bulk data distributors. By law, valuations and sales data is publicly available information and any member of the community can access this information for a prescribed fee. Current contracts with wholesale data brokers allow the supply of valuation roll data including the names and postal addresses of landowners to the wholesalers for on-selling to persons for real estate related usage. As a result of this legislation, bulk data distributors will no longer be permitted to allow distribution of an owner's name and address for any direct marketing purposes. This will be achieved by inserting clauses in the new contract agreements with distributors and the contracts will apply from 1 July this year. I am aware that any breach of these conditions may result in loss of the agreement.

I also welcome the new provisions that will allow land-holders to receive refunds on their rates and land tax dating back up to three years if a change in circumstances warrants an alteration of the land's value. At the moment valuations can only be altered for one year and this change means that, for example, a local government will be able to refund some of the rates already paid if a valuation

needs to be reduced for up to three years previously. I briefly want to touch on what other members have also commented upon, and that is the use of the unimproved capital value of various properties when it comes to setting council rates. Councils should not—and never—raise rates in direct proportion to UCV increases. Councils should be cutting the cloth and ensuring that what services they provide and those charges are equally distributed or properly distributed. This is happening within my electorate and right across the Sunshine Coast.

Many people have retired to the area and have bought their dream home or retired to their dream property. Recent skyrocketing real estate prices have seen many people seriously frightened, especially retirees on a limited income and pensioners. Their properties may rise in value, but their ability to absorb rate increases has not risen. Their incomes often do not rise and they are sincerely frightened that they will be rated out of their properties.

Mrs Attwood: Asset rich and income poor.

Mr CUMMINS: People do say that they are asset rich and income poor. It is very sad that councils sometimes take their eye off the ball and think that the more money that they can accumulate or drag out of the ratepayers the better they look. They actually, in my opinion, are a far better council if they spend their money wisely and keep their rates and charges low. I hope that upcoming rate bills right across the Sunshine Coast are not increased by any more than the CPI from the previous year. I commend the minister and his department in commending this bill to the House for the good work they have done in putting it together.