



Speech by

**DESLEY BOYLE**

**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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**ARTS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Ms BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (4.38 p.m.): I am pleased to support the Arts Legislation Amendment Bill 2003. It will come as no surprise to members of this House that people in Cairns and other regions around the state have not always seen the major cultural authorities in Brisbane as looking after all of Queensland. The Queensland Museum, the Art Gallery, the State Library, the Performing Arts Trust and the Queensland Theatre Company have been properly headquartered in Brisbane as the capital city, but they have provided their wares mostly to those who live in Brisbane and who have been aficionados of those various art forms.

From time to time in places like Cairns we have complained about the amount of moneys spent on these headquarter arts businesses and wished that we could have more of what they offer in places like Cairns and smaller places spread around the region of far-north Queensland. In this regard, I must pay tribute to the Queensland Theatre Company. Over these last three or so years, they have made particular efforts in Cairns not only to bring their own productions there but to lend us their expertise to work with our local theatre professionals and amateurs towards developing theatre arts in Cairns.

In particular, Michael Gow and Sean Mee are very popular and have earned the respect of all of us in the Cairns arts circles for their enthusiastic recognition of the possibilities of regional theatre. Most recently, they were among numbers of eminent people who attended in Cairns for a playwrights' conference that has now become an annual event and is already seeing the tremendous development of playwriting and theatre arts in Cairns and far-north Queensland.

This bill will encourage all of those engaged in the major statutory authorities for the arts throughout Queensland to bring together their wares. Of course, these changes will not be entirely welcomed. I heard the shadow minister refer to the changes as representing a potential for interference by a minister, whether of this government or future governments, in the proper running of the arts. What nonsense! I have no doubt that it may be regarded as interference by some in those organisations from time to time; nonetheless, the proper guidance of the spending of taxpayers' money ensuring that these bodies are, in fact, responsive to all the people of Queensland is the proper business of the Minister for the Arts and indeed of this House of parliament.

I have had experience of being a board member of a statutory authority and know well how easy it is, lost in the focus of the business at the time, to forget that there are broad responsibilities. These broader responsibilities are well covered in this bill by the guiding principles. Of course, we in Cairns embrace those principles, particularly the need to be more responsive to communities in regional and non-outer metropolitan areas. Already we have seen the tremendous benefits in having a Minister for the Arts determined to promote indigenous arts right around this state of Queensland. As a consequence of his actions and followed through by Arts Queensland, Aboriginal artists involved in various art forms are already well known around our country and overseas and are beginning to earn the living that they properly should be able to do through their art form. All of these things will be encouraged by this bill and by the guiding principles. I hope indeed to be a member of the next Beattie government and look forward to ensuring that the guiding principles are well integrated into these statutory bodies and their strategic plans and actual plans of action.

This bill is a fitting finale at a legislative level to this Minister for the Arts. There is no doubt that he has indeed been a vibrant Minister for the Arts. He could not have loved this portfolio more. He could not have promoted the arts more. Of course, he has made poetry a more popular art form than it

was before he came into the job. On various occasions around Queensland I have been present when the minister, when he has been on business, whether to do with employment and training or to do with the arts, has made his point the clearer through poetry.

**Mr Matt Foley:** Sometimes with the poetry of your own mother.

**Ms BOYLE:** It has even been the poetry of my own mother. The minister, as fine as he has been in purveying the poetry of others, cannot lay claim to my discovery of the arts. That goes back to my marvellous mother, Pam Bennett Dunn, who was, in her early adulthood, an award-winning actress; in her middle years, she ran a children's theatre company for which she was, I am proud to say, awarded an Order of Australia medal; and, more recently, she has become an accomplished poet with two books to her credit. Nonetheless, members can guess that I have found the minister's poetic offerings around the state of Queensland to my liking. I must say that from time to time some backbenchers have rolled their eyes at the amount of poetry that they have heard in this parliament. Of course, I have not been one of them.

The arts is about so many things. First and foremost, the arts is about soul. It is about communication, bridging the divide—bridging the barriers of culture, race, age, geography and sex—but also, as this minister has made clear, it is about economic opportunity. This bill is a fitting finale to ensuring that the arts industry in Queensland and all of the major statutory authorities in arts are properly set for the future of arts in this state. I commend the bill to the House.