



Speech by

Dr LESLEY CLARK

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (8.48 p.m.): In rising to participate in the debate on the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I would particularly like to address my comments to one of the amendments the minister has flagged for the committee stage—namely, the amendment to the Irvinebank Repeal Act passed last year. Honourable members who were here then will remember that legislation which terminated agreements between the state and Mr Frank Hilla in relation to his proposed purchase of the Irvinebank Treatment Works and repealed Bjelke-Petersen era legislation dealing with that proposed never-completed sale.

Section 4 of that act demands that Mr Hilla be issued with a permit to occupy over land that contains the old National Bank building where the Hilla family had lived. The intention of that section was to provide the Hillas with ongoing occupation and access rights to the building that had been their home for 20 years. In October last year, Mr Hilla was offered that permit to occupy but he did not accept it, despite strong encouragement. The offer has lapsed under section 442 of the Land Act.

Mr Hilla has made it clear by refusing to accept the permit and moving his family to their own house that he and his family no longer need or want to live in this building. However, this puts the government in a difficult position. The chief executive of the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy is required by law to issue a permit to occupy to a person who clearly does not want it. Section 4, drafted at a time when this circumstance was seen as very remote indeed, has tied the government's hands. The clear solution then is to repeal the relevant section of the act, and I am pleased to support the minister in achieving that purpose.

The treatment works and the bank building have a long and proud history. In 1884 John Moffat, a mining entrepreneur and developer, established his headquarters in the place he named 'Irvinebank' after his birthplace in Scotland. His home he named 'Louden House' after the Louden family who hailed from the Irvine Valley. So the treatment works became the Louden Mill and the timber weir on McDonald Creek became the Louden Dam.

The Irvinebank tin lodes were not turning the hoped-for profit, so John Moffat developed the idea of a central treatment works and set about acquiring the surrounding tin leases. He also commissioned a tin smelter and in 1907 opened the Stannary Hills-Irvinebank tramway. He was truly the father of Irvinebank, one of the most important records of north Queensland's once-vibrant tin industry.

When I spoke on the Irvinebank repeal bill last year, I indicated my strong support for the protection of this area. It needs protection both for its own heritage values and to protect an important asset for the people of Irvinebank, which draws visitors from all over Australia every year and which can create employment for the local people as this component of our tourism industry develops. It is therefore very disappointing that Mr Hilla, before he left Irvinebank, allegedly took with him a number of important historical items from both the National Bank itself and the treatment works. I believe that all possible steps should be taken to investigate these allegations and, if true, seek the return of those items to Irvinebank.

I understand that the government is currently moving to change the tenure of the treatment works and the other associated land from unallocated state land to a more appropriate form of tenure in recognition of its historical value. Surveying will start in the near future and it will soon be possible for

the people of Irvinebank to look to their future with certainty, a future of a living museum of Queensland's tin mining history.

As when I last spoke on this issue, I commend the many people of the Irvinebank community who have worked tirelessly over many years to develop and manage the Loudon House museum which portrays the fascinating history of mining in this region and the life and times of John Moffat. It was with great pleasure that I joined the minister last year in the opening of road access to the museum which had actually been obstructed by Mr Hilla when he held the title to the treatment works. The protection then of the adjacent National Bank and treatment works will enable a cultural heritage precinct to be created, thereby achieving their vision for the preservation of the cultural heritage of Irvinebank for all Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.