



Speech by

Liz Cunningham

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Hansard Tuesday, 8 August 2006

BUILDING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (2.55 pm): I rise to speak to the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is wonderful to see you back so fit and well. Councils do an excellent job in overseeing the inspection process for building within their local government areas. I think it is important to place on record that over time the building processes become more complex and there are the competing interests of developers in local authority areas, community perceptions and expectations in terms of quality of life. These interests can become particularly conflicting when it comes to high-density areas like the north and south coasts and some of the coastal areas—even in my area—where developers wish to build high-density, multistorey buildings when the community wants to retain a particularly laid-back environment for its own quality of life. Councils do have a significant role to play. I would like to put on the record my appreciation to the councils for the work they do.

One of the most refreshing things for a person building in a local authority area, particularly residential builders—people building their own home—is an informed but reasonable attitude of building inspectors. That certainly has been my experience in the Calliope shire and, to a lesser extent, Gladstone, although I do not live in the Gladstone city area and have not built anything there.

The legislation introduces a number of provisions. It recognises the role of councils as concurrence agencies for building assessment work. It increases public access to building approval and inspection documents, and that is important. As I said, people are becoming more aware of the impact of development on their quality of life. It is important that they be able to give informed comment to the council. The bill standardises the archiving period for which building information is kept by local governments for all classes of buildings. It aims to prepare inspection guidelines for building certifiers inspecting commercial buildings. Under the new codes that were introduced some time ago which allowed for private certification there were some problems emerging in terms of certifiers approving particular buildings and particular works on building sites. In some instances when the problems of those approvals became apparent, those certifiers were either no longer resident in the area or no longer practising. So it is important that the local authority, which after all will be the entity that will remain over a protracted period, also be kept informed in relation to approvals and standard of approvals that are granted in their area.

The legislation also aims to provide owners with reminders that building approvals are about to lapse and provide owners with current inspection documents if the approval does lapse. It imposes the same standards on all persons who prepare supporting documents for building development applications. Consistency is something that all sectors of the community respect and expect. I believe it is not only reasonable but also important that there be consistency across agencies. This legislation will also rationalise the penalties applying to offences under the act.

We have already had discussions about the re-use of water. It is certainly a topical issue at the moment. I know that there is a high level of frustration in my electorate relating to greywater recycling and that is the different treatment that members of my community received in relation to rebates and support during the drought that we had several years ago that ended with Cyclone Benny and the support that has been received by people down here. Perhaps that is a debate for another time.

Pool fencing has been shown to be a great protector of particularly young people. In the past there have been problems right across Queensland where pool fences have been installed incorrectly or have been dodgy. The tightening of pool fence requirements has meant the safety of young people has increased. There would be nothing more devastating than losing a child in circumstances that were preventable. This legislation deals with the length of time that building documents have to be stored. I think the principle of pool fencing has been well accepted by the community and has, although costly, proven to be very important.

This legislation also amends the Brisbane Markets Act, the Fire and Rescue Service Act, the Local Government Act, the Plumbing and Drainage Act, the Private Health Facilities Act and a number of others. The standardisation of requirements in the building industry has been welcome. I support the legislation.