



Speech by

Peter Lawlor

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Hansard Tuesday, 28 February 2006

BREAKWATER ISLAND CASINO AGREEMENT AMENDMENT BILL

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (4.29 pm): I may represent the people of Southport at the opposite end of Queensland to the area that is the subject of this bill today; however, I have a keen interest in the progress of this process. There are some broad similarities between the issues faced by the people of the Townsville area and the people of the Gold Coast in respect of the proposed cruise ship terminal projects. I know that, ultimately, decisions made either in Townsville or on the Gold Coast will have their critics. However, I support this bill, which will provide the legislative framework for the planning and development of the Townsville Ocean Terminal, the surplus casino land and the future development area.

The Beattie government has a duty to provide, amongst other things, economic stability and employment opportunities for the people of this state. In that regard, I was impressed by the speech of the member for Burdekin. She went into detail with statistics and so on about what the cruise ship industry could do for the Queensland economy. I would only ask that she pass that speech on to several of the National Party members on the Gold Coast who are yet to be convinced, as she has been, of the benefit of the cruise ship industry to the Queensland economy.

The state government also has a duty to balance these imperatives against other very important considerations. The main one, of course, is care of the environment. This suggests the need for a balance, and that is what I want: a balance between development and the environment. We have to remember that the most environmentally friendly place on earth would be a place with no people at all. However, we have to draw a line somewhere, because we cannot simply pull up the drawbridge at the Gold Coast. I would have liked to pull up the drawbridge in about 1960. That was quite a nice time for me. Since I was only 12, I did not have the worries of the world on my shoulders. I used to run along The Spit area of the Gold Coast and there was not a stick of vegetation there. It was a great place.

Mrs Smith interjected.

Mr LAWLOR: It is still a great place, indeed, but we have moved on. This bill reconciles the interests and concerns of a number of government agencies, the Townsville City Council and the Townsville Port Authority. The bill also ensures that, through a rigorous environmental impact study process, the development is environmentally sound.

I will say a few things about the Gold Coast process in a minute, but the process in Townsville is more advanced than on the Gold Coast. The government has already endorsed a preferred developer and Townsville residents have been able to see an artist's impression of the proposed development. We are not yet at that stage on the Gold Coast. I think there is some concern coming from the people of my electorate. However, being able to actually see what is proposed, how much land it will occupy and what type of amenity for the public will be provided is crucial to the project's acceptance or otherwise. At the moment there is a lot of speculation, assumption and misinformation. With the EIS we will be better able to inform the public, when they can see a visual representation of the proposal.

There were nine interested development consortia for the Gold Coast project. I understand that a consultant will be appointed this week to conduct the EIS. I have about 370 constituents on a database who have expressed concern about the project. Some of them are actually supportive, but almost all of

them want more information. I will be writing to them to give them the details of that EIS—where they can write to and where they can present their submissions.

It is interesting to see the support for this from the Liberal Party and the coalition generally because they have been a little bit, shall we say, tricky—

A government member: Coy.

Mr LAWLOR: 'Coy' is another word we could use—about the project on the Gold Coast. For instance, there is a perception that the coalition is against the project. However, on 22 March 2005 the member for Surfers Paradise—if it gets through the EIS, this cruise ship terminal is proposed to be located in his electorate—said—

The Gold Coast is a tourist mecca and I will support any kind of infrastructure that can add to the value of our tourist market on the Gold Coast.

He continues—

This is not a case of nimby—not in my backyard. I do want it in my backyard. That backyard is on the Southport bank of the western side of the Broadwater—

as is mentioned also by the member for Broadwater.

Another Liberal on the Gold Coast, the federal member for Moncrieff, Mr Steven Ciobo, in the federal parliament on Thursday, 17 March 2005 said—

... it is high time Gold Coast City developed a forward-looking plan to enhance the Gold Coast Broadwater.

He envisaged—

... a sprinkling of cafes and restaurants, which would enable people to enjoy a family outing—

This is all on the western side, in other words the Southport side, of the broadwater. He said—

I certainly support the introduction of a cruise ship terminal provided that ... it can be done in a way that does not degrade our local environment.

That is exactly what is intended. He went on to say that he supported a cruise ship terminal to go into the Gold Coast Broadwater. He went on—

It is my observation that the only reason the Beattie state Labor government is proposing putting a cruise ship terminal onto the Spit is that the two state Labor members in the area have flatly refused to support any development inside of the broadwater itself. This knee-jerk, short-sighted political reaction by the Beattie government is a pathetic attempt to try to prop up the state Labor members Peter Lawlor and Peta-Kaye Croft.

Mr Ciobo is actually accusing the Premier of listening to his local members! Certainly, my position in relation to the broadwater, the western foreshore and Wave Break Island has not changed. I oppose any commercial development or further reclamation in that area. This is also the state government's position. As I said, the Premier is merely listening to particularly the member for Broadwater and me.

The Beattie government has already set aside 93 hectares of land on The Spit between the Sheraton and the pump bypass jetty to the east of Seaworld Drive for park, environmental, coastal management and beach protection purposes. That is recognised by the Friends of Federation Walk in a letter sent to the Premier on 2 August 2004 which thanked him for doing exactly that—protecting this 93 hectares. It mentioned that for over 40 years the community had fought vigorously to keep that area free from development. It thanked the then minister for natural resources, Stephen Robertson, for the protection of that 93 hectares.

The Gold Coast marine project has certain objectives: maintaining open space and enhancing the public recreational experience of The Spit; preserving and enhancing the natural experience of the nature reserve east of Sea World for residents and tourists—that is the Federation Walk area particularly; providing a new dimension to Gold Coast tourism through the provision of infrastructure to cater for cruise ships, superyachts and other marine crafts; and recognising and respecting the traditional Indigenous culture of the Gold Coast by providing an opportunity to deliver an Aboriginal cultural experience to tourists and residents. The proposals contained in the plan will be the subject of a comprehensive EIS statement, and that will give the community the opportunity to provide their views on the project.

There are a couple of other issues relating to some of the misinformation that is being put about. There is no intention to exclude dog walkers from this area as a result of this project. That is similarly the case with surfboard riders, divers and fishermen. That is just part of the misinformation being put around. That will all be taken into account in the EIS study, which will take approximately six months. All of those issues will then be resolved.

Townsville has seen a cooperation of both local and state governments and a local willingness to explore how this boon to the region can be delivered. I support this bill and will watch the progress towards the delivery of the project most keenly.