



Speech by

Steve Dickson

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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MOOLOOLABA, PUBLIC CAR PARK PROJECT

Mr DICKSON (Kawana—Lib) (10.24 pm): The people of the Sunshine Coast need to be reassured that no property developer from the Sunshine Coast is seen to have received favours from this government. Therefore, I raise the matter of a development in Mooloolaba which is in breach of both state and local government regulations. I have major concerns about the proposed Brisbane Road public car park project. Not the least is the fact that a proposed joint venture car parking project has morphed into a large and lofty high-rise building of 122 units. My concern is the lack of probity which continues to dog this joint venture, which is a marriage of public money with a private commercial development—a partnership which requires approval by Treasury, approval which has not been sought or received. Maroochy Shire Council has called in the lawyers to advise if it has acted illegally in handing a publicly owned site to a private developer without state government approval. Did council exercise the enterprise powers under the Local Government Act or has it simply disposed of land under the Land Act? The answer is crystal clear. Council required state government approval for this joint venture enterprise and approval was not sought when contracts were being signed. This joint venture development is a first for Maroochy shire and there are no precedents to follow.

The lawyers advising the council and the developer present totally different points of view. We need clarification for everyone concerned, not just for the Brisbane Road car park but for all future local government joint venture projects. Therefore, I believe that it is imperative that the minister for local government conduct an investigation into two major aspects of this partnership. The original tender advertisement did not fulfil the most basic statutory requirements. The proposal was publicly advertised for just 16 days, not the required 21 days. This is a matter Maroochy Shire Council has acknowledged. Another major concern is the fact that Maroochy Shire Council's original intention was to retain ownership of the \$15 million site, delivering a public car park in partnership with a private developer. Under the resulting contract, the site is to be wholly controlled by the developer. Maroochy Shire Council became lost in a planning and legal mire because this joint venture partnership was a first for both planners and the legal team. Sunshine Coast residents now perceive that the clout of a developer far outweighs the powers of a local government authority and possibly the state government as well. I ask the minister for local government to seek clarification of this issue as a matter of urgency. I used to be planning chairman of Maroochy shire. The problem that I see is that this situation has gone on for a long time. Just breaking the Local Government Act under the tender process is something that should be investigated on its own, but it has taken far too long to go down this path and this matter needs to be urgently looked at.