Speech by

Evan Moorhead

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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URBAN LAND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BILL

Mr MOORHEAD (Waterford—ALP) (3.17 pm): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak in support of the Urban Land Development Authority Bill 2007. This bill is a key part of implementing the Queensland Housing Affordability Strategy. The amendments to the Integrated Planning Act that are contained in this bill will be welcomed by my electorate. Housing is the No. 1 issue facing the people of my electorate. No other issue comes through the door of my electorate office more often than that of people seeking housing assistance. This bill will ensure that our development processes are able to bring land on to the market more quickly. Increasing the housing supply will benefit private ownership, private rental and also those people who currently rely on social and community housing.

The measures in this bill are a holistic approach to a very complex question. This is missed by our federal government colleagues. The federal government has simply had in place demand side strategies like rent assistance. I think on any measure rent assistance has been proven to be an abject failure. The initiatives in this bill—like Kevin Rudd's housing policy—are targeted at building both demand and supply side strategies and linking the two together. We cannot have one without the other. Rent assistance does not mean that one more house or one more unit of accommodation is made available. What both Kevin Rudd's policy and this policy do is bring forward those housing units and make them available for people—particularly young families.

Many of the areas that I represent have for a long time had a reputation of providing affordable housing. A recent report by the *Bulletin* listed those suburbs where the price of units have increased most. Two of the top five suburbs were in my area—that is, Kingston and Beenleigh. The areas traditionally known as providing affordable housing simply do not do that anymore. What is needed is to remove the logjams in the provision of housing. This bill provides three key strategies to that aim, giving the state government the ability to intervene where processes are failing or being held up and are not making new housing more affordable or more available. The bill creates the Urban Land Development Authority to take control of discrete areas and to plan, design and control development to ensure that land can be brought to the housing market more quickly and that this development has an appropriate mix of housing types. The second key element of this strategy is to provide the minister for local government with greater powers to intervene in the development approval process. The third key element is to provide transparency and equity in infrastructure charges.

I will now make some comments about the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Alert Digest No. 9 of 2007*. I thank the Deputy Premier for the comprehensive explanatory memorandum provided with the bill and also, despite the allegations of the member for Moggill, the speedy response to the *Alert Digest*. The *Alert Digest* was tabled in the House on Tuesday and the response to those issues raised were provided the following day. In my short time on the committee often those responses are not provided until the next sitting of parliament. I thank the Treasurer and Deputy Premier for bringing that response forward so quickly.

Paragraph 15 of the *Alert Digest* refers to parliament the question of whether the absence of merit appeal rights under clause 61 and clause 177 has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals. In respect of clause 61, the *Alert Digest* outlines the nine comprehensive and, in my view, quite reasonable

justifications for the appeal rights to be those provided by the Judicial Review Act 1991 going to questions of illegality and jurisdiction rather than questions of merits review. Instead of complicated and lengthy appeal processes, which would frankly frustrate the whole purpose of this legislation, this bill provides for the decision making to be made with communities in the planning stage rather than in the development approval process, with the final decision to be made by a minister who answers to parliament. In respect of clause 177, when considering that the appeal avenues have been limited, one should look at the nature of the power provided to the minister. The power is a key measure in the reforms, providing the planning minister with the ability to intervene in the process and remove logjams in processes conducted by assessment managers. This is a procedural responsibility. It is not for ministers to make the decision by the assessment manager or concurrence agency but for the minister to make others involved in the IDAS process make the decisions they are required to make and to make them in a timely fashion. This is not only reasonable but also entirely sensible and necessary.

There is a great deal of frustration with many involved in the development approval process, particularly in that part of my electorate that is run by the Gold Coast City Council. I hope that the ability of the minister to control this process will mean that there will be less requirement for the minister to call in applications in the future. This is about making the assessment managers make the decisions that they are required to.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee also raises in its report clause 6 and the concern about provision of a Henry VIII clause. Essentially clause 6 provides that by regulation the minister will be able to categorise developments as assessable development, self-assessable development and UDA exempt development. Obviously with this categorisation comes different levels of scrutiny under the provisions of the act. What is in this provision is a question of definition with the terms used analogous to those categories used in schedule 8 of the Integrated Planning Act. This categorisation will be a key part of this scheme in that the UDA development schemes must be approved by regulation. Options for disallowance are provided, as with any other regulation, ensuring that the regulation is not used to avoid the scrutiny of parliament. The provision does, in my view, have sufficient regard to the institution of parliament.

The development of the Urban Land Development Authority is a visionary initiative which provides direct intervention to ensure quick effective development in discrete areas providing a mix of housing required by our community. The bill provides the power for government to declare an area an urban development area. I understand that there are five sites that have been identified as those initially before the Urban Land Development Authority, including a site at Woolloongabba. I understand that this is a site currently housing Goprint and the Lands Department. I hope that this change will be an opportunity for Goprint to move to industrial premises outside of the metropolitan area and will provide an opportunity for that business to grow and make the best of the recent investment by the government in that business.

ULDA will acquire and amalgamate land. It has a role to make a development scheme as soon as that land is declared to be an urban development area. It will make a development scheme which will include land use planning and planning for infrastructure. Importantly, the scheme must ensure the ongoing availability of affordable housing options for low- to moderate-income households. The consultation process is to be provided in a detailed development scheme, moving the decision making into the planning process rather than into the development approval process. This is an important measure which ensures that development is not a question of ad hoc debate at the last minute and the matter is resolved at the earlier stage providing certainty for both developers and the community at the planning stage. Obviously this process is conducted with the oversight of the minister and a power to call in. This strong intervention is required to ensure proper planning and development where market failure and the development approval processes have been beyond the control of local government. Once completed and the scheme is in place, the ULDA will be able to hand back control of the site to the relevant local government.

In the time I have left to me I would like to talk about the changes to the Integrated Planning Act and the regulation of infrastructure charges. This bill will also bring a greater degree of rigour and certainty to the charging of infrastructure charges by council. This has been a major frustration to many in my electorate. A number of groups have raised this issue with me, including the Beenleigh RSL, the Beenleigh Sports Club and the recently proposed Beenleigh cinema development. What is required is to move from the current transitional arrangements used by councils to a schedule of infrastructure charges where applicants have a clear understanding of their obligations. The methodology of infrastructure charging schedules published by councils will be able to be examined by the Queensland Competition Authority which can make recommendations and provide independent advice to the minister prior to their approval. As well, applicants will be able to resolve disputes about the application of the charging schedules to the building and development tribunals.

I am sure these measures will be welcomed by developers, builders and first-home buyers and will support a less expensive and greater supply of housing, particularly in growing outer urban areas like the Waterford electorate.

I have already made some reference to the provisions of clause 177 and the power of the planning minister to make directions. This power gives the minister the ability to make procedural decisions to ensure that the integrated development assessment system is not frustrated by assessment managers and referral agencies. This power is a power to require decisions to be made in a stated time or to resolve conflicts between agencies. Businesses in my electorate, particularly on the Gold Coast, are frustrated by delays in this process and continual and repeated requests for further information. Every day that this process is delayed means houses are not being brought to the market. That means increased costs to the developers which are then passed on to the homebuyers. There is no sense in this land remaining vacant or underdeveloped because these processes simply are not working.

I hope that having this power will mean that it will not have to be used to any great extent. This will bring greater accountability for assessment managers to ensure they are actually doing what they are required to do. This simply is about providing the minister for planning with an ability to make sure assessment managers are doing what is already required of them. I think this is an important piece of legislation that will go a long way to addressing the issue of housing affordability faced by people in my electorate. I commend it to the House.