



Speech by

Liz Cunningham

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Hansard Wednesday, 31 October 2007

LAND VALUATION AND ACQUISITION

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.40 pm): I rise to second the motion. I ask members to imagine being happily settled on a property which they really enjoy living in. They could be mortgage free. They have historic roots and an emotional attachment to that property. Then out of the blue—and often it is out of the blue—there is a knock on the door, often by somebody in a suit, who says, ‘We want your land.’

Government members interjected.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: People panic. They are confused and they are angry. When I said ‘a suit’, I meant that the person who knocks on the door does not live locally. They blow in, they deliver the news and they blow out again. Then the family has to start the process of valuations. Often this process itself is threatening or intimidating. In my electorate there were valuers who valued property sheds. They said that they were worth only \$10,000 when the construction price might have been \$30,000 or \$40,000. When the owner challenged the valuation, they were told by the valuer, ‘I don’t believe you need that size shed. I believe a smaller one would have done.’ A valuer’s job is to value the assets that are there, not what the valuer thinks should be there.

In Queensland a number of tangible issues are recognised in the compensation package, but there does not appear to be any opportunity to place a value on the non-tangible issues. The member for Nanango talked about solatium. The definition of that in the New South Wales and Victorian legislation is compensation that is payable to a landowner for non-financial disadvantage suffered as a result of the necessity to relocate the principal place of residence. Members need to remember that the necessity to relocate is not the owner’s necessity; it is a necessity that is imposed on them, as the member for Nanango said, perhaps for the greater good.

The landowners go through uncertainty. They do not know when acquisition is going to occur. Both negotiated acquisitions and compulsory acquisitions entail a level of uncertainty. Acquisitions have an untold impact on the emotional health of individuals, couples and families. I have seen couples disintegrate through land acquisitions. I have seen people come from Brisbane, visit the people in their homes and say things such as ‘Well, if you don’t take the offer’—which was well under value—‘we will just wait and compulsorily acquire you, or we will see you in the Land Court to determine the valuation.’ That sort of—and these are my words—intimidation and threats is wrong. The process is not transparent, it is not fair and it is certainly not defensible.

An area in my electorate—Targinni—has had significant negotiated acquisitions for the extension of the industrial estate. Some of the people involved received good valuations and were at least able to purchase another property without being heavily encumbered. Others were given poor valuations. I know of an older couple who felt threatened by the process. They were intimidated by people saying, ‘If you don’t take the offer, we’ll just leave you there for five years and when 2007 comes we’ll just take it off you.’ Another couple, who are around the age of 65, wrote—

My wife and I are owners of 10 acres with two houses. We wish to know the government’s intention for 2008. Will they extend the buyback scheme beyond 2007? Buy us out with the same lease-back arrangements as Traveston Dam, or none of the above? If the offer ceases in December 2007, surely we deserve written notice especially to get valuations done. We eagerly await your government’s reply.

That letter was to a bureaucrat down here in Brisbane. These couples and these families live with a great deal of uncertainty which impacts negatively on their lives. They do not choose to leave their properties. They are happy where they are. They have settled and they have roots there. They are told that they will have to move. In my district it is hard to get like for like. It is certainly impossible to get another property for the same price as the compensation package that has been offered so far in most instances in Targinni. There are other acquisitions on the horizon. I want to see those families treated as this motion says—in a fair, transparent and defensible manner so that they know that they have a future without uncertainty, that they have a future that their family can survive and thrive in. They deserve no less, because the sacrifice they are making is not of their choosing but is for our benefit.